The Black Cat

December 1918

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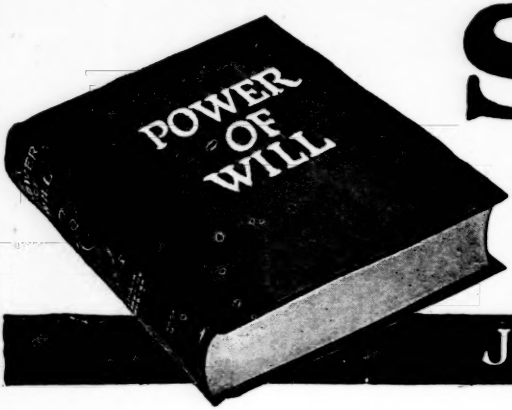

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The Black Cat

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THE BLACK CAT

THE LIGHT IN THE COULEE

By STANLEY ALLEN WILSON

The wife of a young homesteader finds nothing in prairie life that gives promise of future prosperity. Least of all does she see wealth mirrored in the chocolate colored drinking water which she draws from the well.

IT was a deceiving outlook that met Marion Sterling's eyes as she gazed from the back porch after the retreating harvester and horse team driven by her husband in the field beyond. As they grew more distant, harvester, man and horses wavered, and then seemed to disintegrate in the glaring sunlight into numerous independent parts, each seeking to outdo the others in grotesque dancing. Then with a last flash the horses and lower part of the harvester passed from sight into what seemed to be a lake, quivering with ripples. Now only the man seemed to float along until he, too, was swallowed up.

Only the incessant roar of the harvester reminded Marion that this was but a mirage. She hated mirages. They were deceiving, promises that were not kept—Dancing Devils, Jim called them, and well named she thought. The blue haze of Indian summer at midday hung over the ragged brakes to the southwest, tumbling down to the shimmering waters of Sullivan's Lake. North and east of them lay the many thousands of acres controlled by Tom Lane. This was the black water country of Alberta, Canada.

Tom Lane had bitterly resented the building of railroads and the coming of settlers. He had contested Sterling's claim and tried in every way to discourage Jim and his wife during the three years since they had settled. Marion had often heard Lane tell Jim that this was no country for a woman, that it was fit only for men and cattle; and she had come to agree with him.

She knew the prairies to be heartless, and when they reckoned ahead on the year's returns there were many things they must consider in the nature of possibilities, and very often probabilities that might crumble their castles—heat, cold, drought, excessive rain, hail, poor markets. The results of these misfortunes a man can stand, but they are more than a woman can bear when added to the awful loneliness of the prairie.

So as Marion returned to her kitchen from the contemplation of these things, it was with a thankful heart that she thought of the beautiful crop now being harvested.

This year they were going out. They would winter in California, her old home. Jim had promised it.

Marion took a pail from the bench and went to the open well for water.

No bright reflections met her eyes as she gazed into the well. Only a darkening of the clouded surface as her shadow fell across it. The fluid she poured into the pail was chocolate colored, the "black water" from the underlying stratas of coal.

Marion raised the pail to her lips, but set it down quickly as she spat out the mouthful of water she had taken. It tasted of coal gas. Down in the coulee at the springs she had frequently noticed it, but not often at the well.

"Worth a fortune in California, signs like that," Jim had often said.

"But makes poor drinking water in Alberta," Marion had added.

A fitful little breeze sprang up, died away quickly, then came again with a parched dryness that burnt Marion's cheek.

Taking up the pail she started for the house. Then again the breeze came, this

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time hotter than before and with it that which stirred another sense. Facing about eagerly she sniffed the air. There it was again, the unmistakable odor of burning grass. A prairie fire! She knew that with ripened grain and the prairie grass crisp under the long, hot days of August, the settler indeed had cause for grave anxiety.

Glancing out across the phantom lake she saw that Jim had turned and stopped. The two hired men were running toward him. A swift premonition came over her. She thought rapidly, then turning quickly she ran to the barn. Grasping some empty grain sacks she returned and soaked them thoroughly in the watering trough. Gathering them up she ran across the field.

For a few minutes Jim and the men were hidden by the mirage. When it cleared she saw the men had hitched the horses to the plows, and driving at a swinging trot, were running furrows for the back fire. Jim ran to meet her and took the wet sacks from her arms. As she looked into his eyes she saw that he, too, shared her fears. Together they spoke the name "Tom Lane."

As she followed Jim her mind ran back to Lane's old enmity and to the boasts he had made that he would have the Sterling place. She recalled the recent mysterious fire that had burned out the young Englishman at the lower end of the lake. When he left, Tom Lane had promptly taken over his claim

Reaching the brake Marion helped Jim in firing the grass. Then they followed along and beat out the blaze next the grain. Working feverishly they anxiously watched the fire as it burned slowly back against the wind.

When Marion straightened up to rest her back she was alarmed to note the change that had taken place in so short a time. The wind, until now coming in puffs, was growing steadier and stronger momentarily. Rolling clouds of grayish black smoke, shot through here and there with lashing streaks of flame, now topped the rise and came sweeping down over the ragged brakes into the valley. It came on with the roar and velocity of an express train. The wind increased to a gale. The men worked desperately. Marion stood aside, observing the scene with her field glasses.

At one point the fire had reached the fire break. Then where the grass was longer it swept up, paused at the break for an instant only, and as if laughing at the pigmy efforts of man, reached out with a fiery finger and leaped the intervening space into the ripened grain.

Realizing that their efforts had been defeated, all now sought shelter in the coulee, wading out into the boggy flat below the springs. The heat was intense. Smoke burned their eyes. Wisps of flying grass still burning stung their faces. The horses were difficult to manage and kept the two men busy. Jim was with Marion. She coughed and choked although he protected her as best he could from the smoke and heat. In a few moments it had passed. But in its wake lay the ruin of another tragedy of the prairie.

In Jim's face showed lines which told how keenly he felt his loss. Marion concealed as best she could the disappointment she felt, but allowed Jim to carry her out to the solid ground. She still held her field glasses. Taking them, Jim glanced first after the retreating fire. Their house and barn stood as lonely land marks on the blackened prairie.

Then adjusting his lenses he swept the horizon from Sullivan's Lake northward. An object caught his attention on the skyline to the northwest. A horseman! Then another! Marion followed his gaze. Adjusting his glasses to the distance he caught them distinctly just before they broke into a gallop and disappeared. One of them was Tom Lane.

"Well, Mary girl, this is pretty tough," Jim began, betraying the fact in his face that he had recognized the horseman.

"That was Tom Lane," Marion replied, "and this is his work."

That night following their supper Marion and Jim sat out on their porch. The moon had not risen and the blackness of the prairie made the night doubly dark. The air was still warm from the heat of

the day, and pungent with the smoke of burnt grass. The brooding silence of the prairie night seemed to weigh down on them heavily. Jim got up and walked to the end of the porch, looking out over the coulee. At the upper end there was an odd glow. "A clump of brush smoldering," Jim thought. After several moments he noticed that the glow had not diminished, and, moreover, was too bright for a brush fire.

"Want to come, Mary girl, while I investigate this little fire in the coulee?" Jim queried.

Marion arose to accompany him.

"There is nothing left a fire could harm," she replied.

Neither of them felt like talking about it.

A coyote howled in the distance; another answered nearer at hand. Marion shuddered. Jim put his arm around her.

They reached the rim of the coulee, but were not prepared for the scene that met their eyes. Straight into the air shot a steady bluish flame. A hissing sound filled the air. They stood spell-bound for a moment, then became suddenly aware that there were other figures around the fire. Crouching down they waited. One man was talking. Another stood near kicking now and then into the gravelly soil. Two horses stood, bridles down, in the faint background.

"As good a gasser as ever I saw in the Beaumont fields," the man was saying, "and she's steady. Look, no spasmodic puff and go out, and she'll keep gettin' stronger. You'll make a fortune out of her, with the railroad comin' through here and a townsite buildin', and you'll be sellin' town lots and be mayor and so on. It'll beat cow raisin', with all these nesters an' petticoats comin' in. Look at Medicine Hat and Castor—never amounted to nuthin' till them gas wells come in. Old Hanibal is now Lord Mayor of Medicine Hat an' some Lord he is, too, with all them people toadyin' to him. And then I reckon you'll begin to wear starched collars, an' there'll likely be a lady—"

"Shut up!" growled the other. "You talk too much. I brought you out here because I had work for you to do. Now listen. This fellow Sterling is on to us. I saw him with my field glasses watching us when we came out on the brakes back there after the fire."

"Then he'll have the Mounted Police on our trail by to-morrow. I think I'll be movin' on," broke in the other.

"No you won't, because you're going to put a plaster over his mouth before daylight."

"I won't do it. This ain't my affair."

"You will or else I'll turn you over to the Mounted Police for starting this fire and for rustlin' cattle."

"But, Tom, you set this fire yourself, an' I only rustled cattle for you, an' on your orders. All I got was my wages."

Jim started up as he heard the name spoken. "It's Tom Lane," he whispered.

"How far do you suppose your word would go, Kelly? I could land you where you could not get out for twenty years, and"—Tom Lane tapped the heavy holster—"I could do worse than that. Now, listen. You're going to carry this thing through and your pay depends on how well you do it. I'm playin' big stakes this time and there'll be no runnin' away. Now lead your horse down into the coulee back of the corrals and tie him in the bushes. Sterling's men have gone to town. They'll be sittin' out on the front porch broodin' over their loss. Get up close. Don't make no mess. You know what to do. Then get back into the brakes. Take my glasses here and watch her. I'll be back in two days. If she leaves the place, you follow. If she takes a train, wire me. Don't you let her get out of your sight, but don't you dare touch her or I'll—" Tom Lane tapped his holster meaningly. "She's mine. She goes with the claim."

Jim started up, his fists clenched as Tom Lane finished talking; but Marion pulled him down beside her. He realized then that he was unarmed.

"There you go again on some of that yellow stuff," replied Kelly, continuing as he strode back to the waiting horses. "I may be a bad lot, but I'm not bad that way, and this is the last job I'll ever do for you. I'm gettin' sick of it."

Their conversation became indistinct as

they started off down the coulee. One of the men soon mounted and rode off quietly into the night toward the brakes.

"Tom Lane on the Red Deer trail. He is off for Red Deer to file on our mineral rights," whispered Marion.

Jim had been doing some quick thinking, and slipping over the rim of the coulee helped Marion down, taking care to keep out of the firelight.

With hastily whispered instructions to Marion he hurried forward, dropping down now and then to listen. There, ahead, Kelly was tying his horse, and, as the man moved onward, Jim followed. Reaching the barn Kelly paused a moment, then stepped around the corner. Jim stepped forward quickly. A pitch fork leaned against the barn. Picking up the fork he reversed it, grasping the tines. Stepping cautiously, he peered around the corner of the barn. The man had crouched down and was watching the porch. A rifle lay across his knee. With a quick movement before the other could whirl, Jim struck him squarely above the ear.

A shrill whistle brought Marion, who found a sullen-faced man lying on the ground. Jim had slipped off the fellow's coat and was just finishing a thorough job of binding his arms and legs.

"Now your partner will expect to hear the report of your rifle, so, to put his fears at rest, we'll just attend to that now," Jim was saying.

He then took up the fellow's rifle and pointing out toward the prairie fired the ready cartridge.

"Think you're pretty damned smart, don't you?" growled the captive.

"Now to put you in storage," continued Jim, ignoring Kelly's remark, "where the coyotes can't get you."

Dragging the fellow into the barn, Jim deposited him in the large oat bin, remarking as he closed and bolted the heavy door:

"Now, Kelly, with that racy horse of yours and your coat and hat, think I'll be on my way to join your pal. He'll want a witness when he signs that application. Will see you later. So long."

A snarled curse was his only reply.

To Marion, waiting outside, Jim handed the fellow's rifle.

"Give him a sandwich and a drink of water to-morrow noon. You won't need to worry, Mary girl. He's securely bound and locked in the oat bin. Just raise the grain slide and hand it in. He'll drink from your hand. I'd take him with me, but I wouldn't be able to catch Tom Lake, and he would beat me into Red Deer and file on our claim. Kelly's horse is one of the fastest in this country. It's for you, Mary girl. Then we'll take our trip out."

"I'll do it, Jim. I'll watch him; but I'm afraid for you. Tom Lane is a bad man."

"Don't worry about that. With Kelly's horse and rig Tom Lane will fall for it easy. Now run along and get my holster and gun and put up a few sandwiches while I get the fellow's horse."

So saying Jim ran down into the coulee to where the horse was tied. The animal snorted at the stranger, but a few reassuring words from Jim and friendly pats on his neck sufficed to quiet him. Quickly mounting, Jim rode up to the house to find Marion waiting.

The sandwiches were stowed away in the saddle pockets and the belted holster buckled round his waist, then, stooping, he kissed Marion, and again reassuring her that everything would be all right, touched the rustler's horse lightly with the spur and was off at a gallop on the Red Deer trail.

The moon had now risen, making the trail plainly visible. Long after Jim had vanished from sight Marion could hear through the still night, the steady pounding of his horse's hoofs. Then as they died away, a sense of desolation crept over her. She realized that she was alone.

A noise in the barn startled her. Shuddering, she turned and entered the house. She lighted the lamp, closed and locked the door and, drawing the blinds, took up her lonely vigil. She could not think of going to bed. Instead she placed the rifle beside her and took up a book to read. Try as she might she could not get interested. A moth fluttered against the window shade and she started up, instinctively clutching the rifle.

Through the hours that dragged by she felt herself growing more and more frightened, as the night noises, which otherwise she would not have noticed, startled her now and then.

Once, pulling the shade aside, she looked out. All was dark out over the coulee, save far to the right where the glow showed that the gas still burned. Her thoughts turned to Jim; she thought of him riding out there in the night and there came over her a new fear. She knew Tom Lane to be a bad man, and now as she recalled his words, she realized Jim's danger in attempting to follow him. How easy it would be for Lane to ambush him. That would be his way. He would not fight in the open. She wished she had not let Jim go.

No longer thinking of her own safety, her heart filled with cold dread, she now waited for the coming of day.

At the first gray coming of dawn, Marion put out her light and raised the shades. From out the East the new day was breaking, and she wondered what it held for her. Crossing the room she gazed out to the southwest where, clear cut in the morning light, the brakes stood out formidably as if to form a barrier between her and the level prairie country beyond.

Out there somewhere, Jim and Tom Lane were riding. Or was there now only one, and which? With intense anguish she watched through the morning, hoped and watched while the sun climbed to the zenith and started on its downward course.

It was mid-afternoon before Marion could bring herself to go near the barn. However, her prisoner must be fed. Gathering courage she prepared sandwiches and, taking a pitcher of water and the rifle, made her way to the barn. Cautiously opening the door, she stood for a moment to allow her eyes to become accustomed to the light. Then came a voice from the oat bin.

"Hello! Ben expectin' you. I'm most starved an' my throat's so dry I'm chokin'."

Marion set down the rifle and went in when she heard Kelly's voice. She opened the grain slide. Kelly, his hands behind him, stood inside, his smiling, boyish face framed in front of the opening. He noticed that she carried no gun.

"Guess you'll have to feed me unless you want to loosen my hands."

"I think I would rather feed you," Marion replied as she offered one of the sandwiches.

Kelly's eyes twinkled.

"I think I'll have a drink of water first, please."

Marion filled the cup and held it through for Kelly to drink. She really pitied him as she noted how eagerly he drank.

"One more cup, please," pleaded Kelly.

Marion filled the cup and again Kelly drank. She was obliged to tilt the cup, advancing her arm through the grain slide. Quick as a flash Kelly caught her arm. Then as he drew back she saw the frayed rope which had bound his hands lying on the floor. A heavy nail stuck in the wall above. Immediately she understood how Kelly had been able to free his hands.

"Open the door now and be quick," he demanded.

"I won't. Let me go," Marion answered, struggling to free herself.

Kelly twisted her arm. Marion cried out with pain.

"Unlock the door or I'll break your arm."

Marion again struggled, but Kelly held on with a vise-like grip. In an agony of pain she found herself helpless. In despair she felt a growing faintness.

"All I want is to get away. I won't hurt you. Now open the door," Kelly again demanded.

Realizing her helplessness, Marion drew the bolt. Kelly kicked open the door and stepped out.

"Was awful sorry to have to hurt you, Mis' Sterling, but I just had to get away. I've an old Mother who couldn't have stood it. I've been a wild, good-for-nothing cowpuncher, but I'm not all bad. I was afraid of Tom Lane. I want you to believe me when I say I couldn't have done it. I couldn't. I'm afraid now I'll have to borrow one of your horses. Mr. Sterling has mine."

Kelly stepped forward and hastily examined the horses.

"Think I'll take the sorrel," he said as he took the saddle off the peg and stepped into the stall. Kelly saddled quickly and backed the animal out.

Marion stood rubbing her arm. She was beginning to feel sorry for this wayward boy who had been a tool in the hands of a bad man.

"I reckon for safety's sake I ought to lock you in that oat bin," observed Kelly as he paused a moment.

"Oh, please don't, Mr. Kelly," pleaded Marion, "I'm so afraid, and in the dark—"

"Well, I won't do it, Mis' Sterling, if you'll promise to play no tricks on me."

"I promise."

Kelly's eyes strayed longingly to the sandwiches.

Again Marion pitied him, and hastily wrapped them up and handed them to him. Kelly received them eagerly, placing them in the saddle bag. Marion stepped outside. Kelly followed. Hastily mounting, he glanced around and started off. Marion noted the hunted look in his eyes. Possibly he was not so bad.

"Hey, Mr. Kelly," she called after him, "don't you want your gun?"

Kelly halted, paused a moment and rode back.

"On one condition, Mr. Kelly; that you'll ride south."

Kelly nodded. He understood. She did not want him to meet Jim. Receiving the gun, Kelly thanked her. Tears stood in his eyes. "I'm going back to the States," he said, "I'm sick of this. You have a fortune out there," he continued, motioning toward the coulee. "Sell and go back. This is no country for a woman."

Touching his hat he galloped away toward the south.

"Good luck, Mr. Kelly," Marion called after him.

She went into the house and got her field glasses.

Down the valley Kelly was riding, the long swinging gallop carrying him swiftly over the prairie. On a little rise he paused and scanned the horizon. Turning in the saddle he waved his hand and was gone.

Marion shifted her glasses. In all her range of vision there was not another living thing. The loneliness of the prairie oppressed her. Kelly's words came back to her. "This is no country for a woman." If they could only sell. This might be their opportunity. She longed for a country where were hills and trees with running streams, and where there were people.

The sun was just dipping the western horizon. Purple shadows were creeping out from the base of the cliffs. Jim would not be home until midnight. She dreaded the coming night. Again taking up her glasses she scanned the brakes. There on the top she descried an object. It was moving. Adjusting her glasses to the distance she again focussed them on the cliffs and located the object. It was an automobile. As it came on she wondered who it could be. What could have happened? She knew that there were no automobiles thereabouts. It was some one from town. Then Jim must have been—

In despair she was now prepared only for the worst as she watched while the machine skimmed along the top of the bluff and disappeared. A few minutes later it reappeared in the upper end of the valley at the base of the cliffs. Like a bird it sped down the valley, rapidly drawing nearer Now it had reached the coulee. There were several men in the machine, but she was unable to make out the forms with sufficient clearness to identify them. There they had stopped. The men got out. She watched as they walked over to the rim of the coulee. Then her flesh turned cold as she devised its only possible meaning. Lane had won and had brought these men. Recalling his words she now wondered what would become of her. Lane would come to the house. Terror stricken, she realized that she must take flight. She would not wait for his threatened possession. If only she had kept Kelly's rifle.

Taking advantage of a moment when the men were not in sight she ran across the yard and slipped into the brush at the edge of the coulee. She would wait there for the coming of night, then she would go on.

For an interminable age it seemed she waited. Then she heard the exhaust of the automobile. As it grew fainter she again felt easier. Still she waited, now changing to a more comfortable position. Then the sound of foot steps fell on her ears. Lane had come—alone. With sickening heart she crouched lower. The man had reached the step. There he stopped. a clear, shrill sound—a whistle she knew. Then through the stillness there rang out

With bounding heart she ran out of the bush.

"Jim," she cried, "it's you!"

"Yes, Mary girl, it's I," Jim replied, "but tell me what has frightened you so."

"Oh, I thought you were Tom Lane."

Then, with her head nestled on his arm, she told him regretfully of Kelly's escape and of her fears since.

"Never mind," said Jim as she finished. "Kelly wasn't so bad, anyway. We got the man we wanted."

Jim told her of his overtaking and surprising Lane on the prairie, and of his delivery to the Mounted Police in Red Deer; and of his meeting the officials of the P. C. R. in the Land Office and their trip out with him.

"And now, Mary girl," Jim was saying, as he laid a crisp piece of paper in her hands, "we've lots to do. We pack tonight; to-morrow we start on our trip. We're going out and we're not coming back. This is no place for you."

Marion's eyes shone as she looked at the draft in her hands. Its size startled her, then, as her eyes filled, the figures blurred and she feared that she had been mistaken.

"Tell me, Jim boy, is it true?" she cried.

Jim was laughing.

"It is all true, Mary girl."

Dusk was gathering now. High on the cliffs to the west an automobile light moved swiftly along. A coyote howled dismally. Like a lost soul it seemed to protest against a bitter existence.

Marion shivered and snuggled closer in Jim's arms.

"For you, Mary girl, I want the most beautiful place in the world. In California, where nature backons from dreamy, wooded hills and flowers bloom the whole year round, there we'll build our home. And then maybe some day there will be little ones to play about and help us forget our disappointments on the prairies. There we'll gain at last the happiness we have so much desired."

Marion sighed contentedly.

"I'm glad Kelly got away," she said.

NEXT month; THE INVISIBLE COMRADE *by Chart Pitt,* a story of the South Seas. Old Man Johnson, keeper of the Rogue's Reef light for twenty years, is found dead in his bed. Although he has been dead several days when the discovery is made, the fog bell, which requires winding every seven hours, is still tolling. After three men try the job and pass it up, a fourth man accepts the berth with the understanding that once he reaches Rogue's Reef he must stay whether he likes it or not.

A WOLF IN CHEAP CLOTHING

By HERBERT WILSON SMITH

Letters of Max Marcus to his partner, Ike Pickus, show just how the College Club Clothing Company does five hundred thousand dollars worth of business the first year.

South Bend, Ind.
Feb. 10.

EAR Ike:—

You are already hollering now why is that sucker in South Bend instead of where he started for in Valparaiso, so to save your voice Ike I will tell you. I will explain why I am here Ike.

I met a guy on the train that knows Sam Grierson of Grierson Bros. here. He says he can put me in right with him. So I come here with him. He is to a show with him right now, filling him full of dope about "College Club Clothes." I will see him to-morrow and the first order I send you will open your eyes. Old man Wagner in Valparaiso is a dead one anyhow Ike. He maybe was OK for a line like Shoen Bros. what I used to sell him but for us he is nix. So I used my head and come here.

I ain't been waisting no time to-night even if I don't see Grierson until to-morrow. Ed Bashwitz of Bashwitz and Blum is here to the hotel and I just showed him my samples. He says I should sell easy 100 suits of them Palm Beaches to every customer what I show them to. He says to me "Ike Pickus is the best designer on Market St." He drew some pictures of them Pinch Back models even. He says I ought to sell 100 of them suits to every customer. But he is wrong Ike: I can sell more as that. If them suits was rotten entirely I could sell 100 to each customer But they ain't so I should sell more than 100 to each customer. So I been doing some figuring Ike. I see at the least four customers a day. That's at the least 400 suits a day at a average of $3.75. That's 1500 dollars per day sales. That's pretty good for the first day. Or $450,000 dollars our first year of business Ike. You are lucky I am your partner instead of drawing down 7 per cent on them 450,000$ Ike. So get enough operators to turn out 400 of them suits a day starting to-morrow when you will get my first order for 400 suits. Congratulating you on the mutual success of our business together,

Your partner,

Max.

P. S. I will enclose order for 400 suits to-morrow.

Fort Wayne,
Feb, 12.

Dear Ike:

You will probably holler so they can hear you in S. Chicago because there ain't no order in this letter, so I will explain why I did not send you no order from Grierson Bros. yesterday. I would of explained yesterday only I did not stop long enough no place to write. I did not get no chance to explain nothing Ike. You can't run also carry two sample cases and write letters Ike unless I was a war correspondent. And I wisht I was. It would be a quiet life beside yesterday.

When I went into Grierson's store and gives Sam one of my new cards printed "Max Marcus of Marcus and Pickus" he throws same in my face and throws his fist in my face after it so quick I gets a black eye.

"Out of my place you loafer," he yells. "You bunco steerer, you got enough of my money even if your poker sharp friend only gives you half." And I goes out the front door with him shoving me. I only had time to beat him to the cor-

ner and pick up my cases off the sidewalk. When I paid my bill at the hotel there was "Drinks and sandweges $18.65." "Who was in my room, a elephant?" I asks the clerk. "Oh, that's for your friend," he says. "He just left." "Oh you don't say," I says, and that held him a while.

You see Ike I told the clerk I would pay the bill of the friend of Grierson's as a acknowledgement to him for getting us in right with same. Which he did not do Ike. I would of told you this yesterday only I intended to win it back off him matching quarters and so not need to say nothing about same. So I will need some more expense money Ike, about $50 dollars.

If anybody tells you that Sam Grierson has a big laugh on me and that he won $30 off me they are just trying to save his face, Ike, and if they says a bartender give me the black eye tell them there a liar Ike and they can't get me in bad with you with that kind of cheap stuff. You have got the easy end of this business Ike, all you gotto do is sit back in your chair and sign checks. As the poet says Ike, "It's the guy on the road that carries the load."

Your earnest partner,

Max.

P. S. I have decided to telegraft you for the 50$ dollars Ike, so as soon as you get the telegraft send me the fifty dollars because I have already explained in this letter why I need the $50 dollars. Send me the $50 dollars by telegraft as soon as you get my telegraft requesting same.

Defiance, Ohio, Feb, 14.

Dear Friend and Partner Ike:

I would have an order to send you to-day Ike except for you picking out such a rotten town to send me to. Every pool room or barber shop I go past you see a card for "One Price Tailoring Co." in the window Ike. I go in to get a shave and the barber says to me "Haircut! No? Well can't I sell you a nice suit of clothes; I got a swell book of samples here."

The barber shops Ike is the submarines of the clothing business. I am so disgusted I am going out and get a sandwege and a few glasses of beer or something and go to bed. Hoping this finds you cheerful and in good health,

Your partner,

Max.

Canton, O., Feb, 18.

Dear Ike:

I gets here your letter concerning my telegraft for $50. Why get so excited Ike when you didn't send me no 50$. It is me that should be mad Ike setting in the telegraft office waiting for you to telegraft me 50$ when all the time you was sending me 35$ in a check by mail that I couldn't cash. You say do I think all you got to do is to sign checks. But I didn't ask you to write no check Ike, I ast you to send the money by telegraft 50$.

You say you don't appreciate my poetry and if the guy on the road didn't carry such a big load he might sell more goods maybe.

It ain't my poetry Ike, but was wrote by some poet. I don't know what you mean, but if you mean boozing you don't mean me Ike. You know there ain't nobody can drink more than I can without its effecting them no less.

You ask where are the orders, have I run out of blanks. You must be being sarcastic Ike for I got plenty order blanks. I ain't used none yet. I would of had an order to send you to-day for 400 suits accept that Ed Bashwitz has got Joe Segilman to dinner and for a show after. This order for 400 suits I would of got from Joe Segilman when I took him to dinner instead of Ed Bashwitz but I could not cash check for 35$ when I ast you to send me 50$ by telegraft. So whose fault is it Ike I don't get the order.

You ask what are you going to do with them operators you got to turn out 400 suits a day, play penuckel? I wouldn't play penuckel with them Ike, you ain't such a good penuckle player. Let them make 400 suits a day Ike. Then all I got to do is sell 400 suits a day. That is for me to worry about Ike. And it don't worry me none.

You got the easy end of the business Ike.

All you got to do is cut out patterns for "College Club Clothes" with a scroll saw while I got to sell 400 suits a day. Or I got a idea Ike and to show you I ain't sore for the sarcastic letter you wrote me and sent a check I can't cash which I am sending back to you I'll spring it on you. Here it is. Have your operators make a lot of pennants like this: on one side

Marcus Pickus
Make Palm beaches

and on the other side different like this

Palm Beach
Pinch Backs.

Then we will give one of these with every order I have took for the stores to hang up in its window. What do you think of that eh Ike. I write this in a letter so when this idea is a big success you won't claim it was your idea. The letter will prove it is my idea. Hoping for the continued success of our business,

Your confident partner,

Max.

P. S. The check for 35$ I can't cash so you will have to send me the 50$ by telegraft or if you have to send it in a letter send a N. Y. draft. The check for 35$ I will keep and bring home to remind you of the mean letter you wrote me when I was selling 450,000$ goods a year.

Meadville, Pa., Feb. 25.

Dear Ike:

The towns you picked would have been OK for the Golden Crook Co. but they ain't no good for the "College Club Clothing Co. Marcus and Pickus Sole Owners and Props." This is a college town Ike and they ain't buying no palm beaches because the collegers go home June 10 and stay all summer. They have it as soft as a straw hat salesman, eh Ike. But I ain't waisting no time. This here college give me a idea Ike. Suppose there college colors is yellow and blue like University of Ann Harbor is. We make them blue corduroy pants with yellow leather cuffs. That ought to get them collegers eh Ike. Next winter when we done 50.000$ extra with this idea you will thank me for it and this letter will show it is my idea and not your idea. That with 450,000$ regular business will make 500,000$ first year's business.

Here is a little bad news for you Ike I didn't want to spring on you until I had sprung my idea. My trunk got dropped down the elevator shaft here at the hotel and broke up bad. I had to have it fixed here, also the suits were spilled out at the bottom of same and to save you money for new samples I had them dry cleaned. This had to be paid for cash money to save you time and not break into my schedule of selling 400 suits per day. I am making draft on you which the hotel endorsed. And you'll have to pay same or you'll be libel for using the mails to defraud. Here is the paid bills for fixing the trunk and the cleaning. The reason the cleaning bills says

"Thrasher Bros. Garage and Taxicabs
10 hours out $28.00"

is because they run a garage with there dry cleaning business and use the old gasoline in the cars. They only have one bill head because there dry cleaning business is cash and they made a special job and cleaned the suits in ten hours.

The trunk was fixed here to the hotel. You can see there bill "Trunk Held." That means when the trunk was broke it didn't hold and when they had fixed it it held all right see Ike.

Your sinsere partner,

Max.

P. S. If anybody tells you there ain't a elevator in this hotel there a liar. There just putting one in that's why my trunk fell down the shaft. The elevator wasn't put in yet and the elevator boy thought it was.

Dunkirk, N. Y., Mar. 3.

Dear Ike:

Your letter to hand asking me am I carrying Athaletic Art Underwear on the side. You spoiled a great idea there Ike. I have been saving this as a surprise for you at the end of the season. What I am making off the Athaletic Art Underwear will pay all my expenses and I was going to make you a present of the whole lump

sum, not in a check either Ike that you can't cash in these rube towns. But your one of them kind of fellows Ike that can't look a gift horse in the face. You should not be so suspicious of your partner. Perfect confidence should be between partners Ike like husbands and wives. I am afraid you don't understand this here salesmanship Ike. There's a psycology to it. You say your operators quit till they get their back pay. What are you hollering about Ike? You been kicking all the time because you had all them operators and now you are kicking because you ain't got them operators. Your hard to satisfy Ike. Why don't you give th m all checks for 35$ that they can't cash.

I got something for them operators to do now Ike now you ain't got them. Here is a order for 24 suits. You will note there all model suits same as models I took out. They are for me Ike because the dry cleaning place where I was having them suits cleaned burned down.

They was to ship them suits here but instead I gets a letter saying there place burned down. I think they are a liar Ike but what can I do? A letter ain't model suits. And without model suits I can't sell 400 suits per day. So you can't kick because you ain't got no orders for your operators to work on now Ike.

Your cheerful partner,
Max.

P. S. I would have sent you the letter saying the place burned down only I am going to send it back to them and tell them I think they are a liar and where are the suits.

Utica, N. Y., Mar. 9.

Dear Ike:

You should of picked the winners in a flying machine race instead of these here towns you sent me to. I don't suppose you know that they made clothes here so I will tell you and see if you can remember it until you make out my next route. Our line would be about as easy to sell here as water at Niagara Falls which I went through last week. But even at that Ike I could sell them if I had a decent expense acc't to take customers out on. But you can't do nothing on no 75$ per week. When a man is on the road Ike you've got to be a good fellow especial when I got a new line they don't know nothing about.

But I have made a lot of friends for you Ike and from what they tell me all along I'll sell them twice as much in the fall which will make up for not selling them nothing this spring and give us our 450,000$ business for the year. Not bad for the first year.

I have your letter telling me that Bashwitz and Blum have got out a set of models just like ours only for seventy-five cents per suit cheaper. Can I help it that the biggest house in Chicago thinks you a so good designer that they steal your stuff?

You are doing the making Ike and you can make same as cheap as Bashwitz and Blum. I got to hand it to you there. So I am to-day reducing prices on all models $1 that makes us 25 cents cheaper than them so you got no further kick coming. I done my share.

You always did figure too much profit Ike anyhow. Even with prices as they was could Ed. Bashwitz sell 400 suits per day like I can? No he can't.

If anyone tells you that them extra models you made for me I sold to Ed Bashwitz you tell them there a liar. Tell them I am your partner Ike and you got so much confidence in me you know I wouldn't pull no such trick on you. Tell them where do they get that stuff? I will close now with assurance of a doubled business on our new prices.

Your busy partner,
Max.

New York, N. Y., Mar. 18.

Dear Friend Ike:

Your letter was forwarded to me here and I hasten to reply to same. I am sorry for you Ike that your business went bankrupt. But what can you expect Ike when you don't know no more about business than to send a 35$ check by mail when you should have sent 50$ telegraft that I couldn't cash. I am surprised

though Ike with no more to do than you had to do that you couldn't keep things straight.

I would have had your letter sooner but I came on here to see Benny Katz of Katz and Ettlinger Boys' Reefers. You will be glad to know Ike that your failure of business leaves me all right because I had just took a job to go out for Katz and Ettlinger and sell boys' reefers for same. You will be glad to know too Ike that I hold you no hard feelings for loosing me my half of a business that did 450,000$ its first year. I should of at least charged you seven per cent of them 450,000$. But let by gone be gone by Ike. Some day you will appreciate what it means to a man for you to have a generous partner like I was.

I showed Benny Katz that part of your letter where you said, "The trouble with the business Max was that you sold goods faster than we could buy the piece goods to make them of. It took all our money to buy you order books." Benny says "That's the kind of a salesman we want Max."

So if your letter was sarcastic Ike I will overlook it. It returned good for evil Ike. It got me my job and now you don't need to worry how your failure to make good throws me out because it don't Ike. All my customers what I saw this spring told me to come back when I had a good line and now I am in position to do same.

Hoping your failure will not make you feel bad on my account,

Your ex friend and partner,

Max.

P. S. My sample trunk is at Hotel Devort. You can get same by paying bill of $27.00. Which it is worth if them crooks they has for porters ain't stole the suits which they probably has by now.

TWO STORIES FOR JANUARY

MISFORTUNE'S GOLOSHES *by Carl Clausen.* For two years, "Spider" Charlie's wife endures his insults, assaults, and sneers. When one night, in a drunken rage, he throws a bottle of olive oil at her, she decides to go away with the man who is the Spider's partner in the spectacular profession of building climber. She starts to wipe the Spider's shoes, soaked in olive oil from the shattered bottle; but changes her mind when it occurs to her that she may be interfering with the machinery of fate.

THE ARMS OF THE OCTOPUS *by Augustin W. Breeden.* The Octopus is the German spy system, one tentacle of which fastens upon the Australian schooner, Banyan Tree, loaded with wheat for the allies and en route to the port of delivery. Fortunately the long arm of the British Admiralty reaches as far as the tentacles of the Octopus.

MERT THE MURDERER

By HARRIETTE WILBUR

Notwithstanding his bloodthirsty disposition, Mert does not strike terror to the hearts of the people among whom he lives and moves. He is outwardly gentle, allowing his blood lust to crop out in the class room only.

MERTON Govett sat sprawled over the pine table that almost filled his little room beneath the eaves. His hair was rumpled, his brow moist, his shirt rolled down at the neck and up at the sleeves—physical symptoms of his mental difficulties.

He forced his sleep-soggy eyes to follow the text of the medical tome spread out before them; but they had a tricky way of winking slowly so that beheaded and curtailed words mingled in an alphabetical pie which his sluggish brain rejected as unappetizing.

When he caught himself skipping words between winks, he sat up with determination.

"I've just got to finish this before next week," he exhorted himself. And with this mental bracer, he began anew the paragraph which for all his reading, remained meaningless and dead.

It was not an auspicious day for cramming. Energetic in name only at any season of the year, the quiet little village of Wakeup was more somnolent than usual this sleepy August afternoon.

A drowsy haze lay like a thick slumber over the land, and the drowsier hum of out-of-door sounds blended in a musical medley as soporific as a lullaby croon. Distinct, yet muffled and softened by the heavy air, came the fifing of crickets in strident chorus, the asthmatic cough of the gasoline engine down at the creamery, the sputter of a Ford jackrabbiting its way out of town, the thud of leisurely footsteps along the wooden sidewalk, the tinkling laughter and chatter of children at play, the rattle of crockery as housewives did the dinner dishes, the drone of Liddie Baxter's old reed-organ wheezing out a long-meter hymn, the clatter of an empty wagon crawling along the dusty street, its every spoke clamoring for the moisture that barnyard prophets near and far were foretelling in long-drawn antiphone: "I kno-o-o-ow it's go-o-o-o-o-o-ing to-o-o-o-o ra-a-a-a-a-a-ain!"

Even an ambitious young medical student could not long resist the hypnotic siren song, and while Merton thought himself studying hard, a jerk of his leaden head awoke him with a start.

"No use," he yawned. "This weather sure has me groggy. Maybe a little exercise will exorcise Morpheus."

Naturally, he wandered "down town."

As Merton passed the Grannis Hotel, on Main Street, he saw that Uncle Hi, the proprietor of the house (a title rightly belonging to Aunt Sate), had already succumbed to the delicious languor of half-waking, half-sleeping which he himself had been fighting. Already narcotized by Aunt Sate's New England boiled dinner and his cob pipe, the combined aromas of which still lingered on the heavy air, Uncle Hi had no ambitious scruples against yielding to the seductions of Morpheus. His brain had shut up shop and retired behind drawn shades and locked doors, permitting Consciousness to lift anchor for a placid drift out into the sea of dreams.

So the old gentleman lolled back with his denim-cushioned armchair tilted against the wall, his heels hooked over its front rung, his red bandanna fashioned into an odd cap, and his oldest and strongest pipe sagging from his relaxed lips.

But just as Merton was passing, the slap of a screen door in the rear of the

house, where wren-like Aunt Sate flitted about in perpetual motion, brought Uncle Hi to life. The tilted chair-legs came to the porch floor with a thump, and he rubbed the daze out of his eyes with his bandanna.

In the midst of explosive yawns and prodigious stretchings he discovered Merton grinning at him.

"Hello, Mert. Come in an' set awhile. I'm all slept out, an' it's real comf'table here, and you an' me hain't had a chin for quite a spell."

Even more than a siesta did Uncle Hi, a true Boniface, enjoy a tidbit of gossip. So Merton accepted the invitation and sat down on the edge of the porch.

"When be ye goin' back to the U-nigh-var-sity, Mert?"

"Next Friday."

"Yer last year, eh?"

"Yes, my cadaver year, so to speak."

"Ca-day-ver? What sort of a year is that?"

"Senior, then. You see, a part of a senior medic's course is the dissection of a body; and a cadaver is not always easy to get, let me tell you. 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave,' says the poet, and I guess he's right, for we medics find they seldom lead to the classroom. Stiffs generally prefer the grave to—"

"By jing, Mert! My stummick wa'n't never very strong for blood an' corpses an' sich onpleasant things. I hope ye get yer stiff, Doc, but for my stummick's sake, don't say nuthin' more 'bout it to me. Le's talk 'bout somethin' more pleasant. D'je hear 'bout the movie man that was here t'other day?"

Merton had, but knowing Uncle Hi wanted to tell the story again, he raised his eyebrows questioningly and let the old gentleman go ahead.

"Took dinner here two-three days ago," Uncle Hi chuckled. "Can't tell what kind of a looker he might be, with his trimmings off, for he was wearin' one o' them foreign beards all over his face and neck, an' a Charlie Chaplin kind of upper-lip piece, an' a pair o' them new-fangled horn specs, big as blue saucers. Said his eyes was weak from takin' pictures in them bright lights they use in the studio."

A sudden thought struck Merton, one that had missed him on the first telling.

"Why, I didn't know there were any film companies outside New Jersey and California, at least, any of consequence. What company did he represent, and where was he from?"

"Don't remember the name o' the company; his'n was Brown—Hiram Brown. Said I might fergit his last name, but wouldn't be likely to fergit his fust one. Real jolly chap. From C'lumbus, he said, looking fer a likely place to fillum some Wild West stunts. Said he liked the frontage of the Grannis Hotel mighty well. Stayed two-three hours here on the porch, after dinner, smokin' an' gassin'. Seemed real intr'sted in hearin' all 'bout Wakeup, past an' present, an' future even. Said it ought to make a likely location fer the fillum he has in mind."

"That's queer, too. I wouldn't think Wakeup, a quiet little Ohio country village old enough to be overgrown with shade trees, would be wild and wooly enough for a Wild West film. Why, there isn't a pioneer front on this street, and I'll bet that soft maple in your side yard is as old as you, Uncle Hi."

"Older, boy. It had a fine start afore I was old enough to think I'd ever run this here hotel. Wahl, 'twould ha' been a feather in Wakeup's cap to be showed all over the country in a fillum, but I 'spose Wakeup wa'n't wild enough to suit him; 'tany rate, he hain't showed up since."

"Oh, Wakeup isn't so bad, Uncle Hi. Why, you can't find a more prosperous community in Ohio. And now, with our Lincoln Highway improvements, we're looming up big on the map. Wakeup may yet realize the ambitious possibilities of its name."

"Yes, I guess our seedlin' stretch o' road'll be as good as any on the hull highway. Hatton tells me the job keeps a stream o' money flowin' through the bank all the time. Far as I c'n see, though, that contractor makes that pavin' gang o' dagoes earn their money. They've fairly et up that six-mile stretch, an'll be leavin' soon for a stretch t'other side o' Marion, the contractor told Hatton t'other day."

"Anything to stop the farmers' eternal plowing up the roads. To them, working the roads means plowing up a good stretch to make it as impassible as possible. The country will be better off when local road work is stopped, and contractors handle all such improvements."

A somnolent pause ensued, though not for long.

"Then ye'll miss the plover an' snipe shootin', Mert?"

"Yes, I'll be gone before the season opens. Sorry, too, for I'd like to get out with a gun once more."

Uncle Hi chuckled, indicating a forthcoming joke.

"Yer welcome to the old carbine, you know. I guess the old girl's good fer another shot or two yet, even if I am on the retired list myself. 'Bout ev'ry so of'n, I go over her and ile her up. Keeps her in good shape, an' kinda brings back my boyhood days."

"Thanks, Uncle Hi. I don't think I could get many snipe on the wing with a rifle," laughed Merton, and then added slyly, "but I might use her for running down my cadaver. Hello! I guess your Wild West show is materializing, after all."

He nodded toward a unique procession that had just turned into Main Street from the north a block beyond. A big auto led the way, closely followed by several horsemen. With the exception of one who was masquerading as Buffalo Bill, the latter were in Indian array. Their make-up was complete in every detail, even to revolvers on their hips, rifles on their backs, and cartridge belts with rows of murderous bullet-noses showing below the tape.

"Yes, that's Hiram Brown in the car there," said Uncle Hi.

The driver of the car was in ordinary clothes, b·· did wear a generous amount of facial trimmings. Indeed, it would have been difficult to tell just what sort of looking man any of them might be, for the "Indians" had on liberal coats of war-paint, and "Buffalo Bill" wore the familiar Cody adornments.

The man in the car hailed Uncle Hi as a familiar.

"Back again, be ye?" beamed Uncle Hi.

"Yes, this place just fits our scenario. We're in a bit of a hurry, though. Want to shoot while the sun is just right. Where can I find the mayor? I want his permission before we go riding up and down here, disturbing the peaceful afternoon."

"Hatton's the mayor. You'll find him in the bank yonder. He's the cashier." Uncle Hi pointed to the First National Bank on the corner opposite the hotel.

"Told him that t'other day," added Uncle Hi in an aside to Merton.

"Thanks. Here, Bill," the director called to "Colonel Cody." "Just step in the bank and ask Mr. Hatton for permission to stage this stunt. I'll get the camera in position, and we'll shoot and be off before a crowd can gather."

This last remark rather abashed the few loafers and business men who had gathered in doorways and on porches to watch the proceedings. Most of them promptly faded from sight behind none too transparent window panes, where they could see without being filmed. Uncle Hi obligingly scurried inside the screen door, but Merton remained outside. There would be plenty of time for him to disappear when the picture-making began. Besides, he was becoming curiously interested in the whole affair. It seemed incongruous—Wakeup in a Wild West film. And there was something peculiar, almost uncanny, about the men themselves. For one thing, they had an air of assurance, of settled purpose, bordering on insolence, oddly at variance with the director's words about obtaining the mayor's permission. One would think the director would have obtained permission before bringing his men. Then, too, they appeared quite ready to go ahead without permission.

Of course, Hatton would not be likely to object. As Uncle Hi had said, it would be quite an honor for Wakeup to be filmed.

Merton stood watching and studying the men. And in the meantime, things did not remain at a standstill in the street.

The man called Bill dismounted in front of the bank and strode inside. Four of the motley crowd of pseudo-Remington Indians made a group in the street, care-

lessly lolling on their saddle horns while their restless horses milled up and down the block. A fifth, however, stopped his buckskin at the curb in front of the bank, and stood on the edge of the walk, tightening his saddle girth.

The director, in the meantime, had turned his car so it was in the middle of the street, facing north, but on the far side of Grannis Avenue, which crosses Main Street south of the hotel and bank. It was an old car, but high-powered, and Merton noticed the engine was idling with the even throb of a greyhound's easy breathing.

"Good motor, that," he remarked, "and in perfect tune, too."

But Uncle Hi was not interested in the engine.

"What's that feller saying?" he deftly silenced Mert, and curved his hand about his ear. Uncle Hi felt a sort of responsibility for the "fillum."

The director was megaphoning orders to his men, who seemed to regard them as entirely superfluous. They appeared to be already familiar with the director's instructions. But, conceded Merton, probably film actors always regard a director with professional disdain.

"Now, remember, all of you, you're to be out of sight around that corner where we came in, and when I toot this horn three times, you're to come dashing into view and straight toward me. Bill must be in the lead, and the rest of you half a block behind, shooting as you come. Make the dust fly, all of you, and everybody please keep off the street, for we don't want any damage suits on our hands."

At that, one of the "Indians" beckoned suggestively to Merton.

"Hi there, you don't want to get shot, do you?" And his grease-mask wrinkled in a grin that was positively sinister in effect, however friendly the face beneath may have intended the smile to be.

"I'll risk it," replied Merton, and stood his ground.

Just at that instant, Lafe Aldrich, the printer, came darting out of his office next door to the hotel. He was bareheaded, except for the green shade over his eyes. He had a slip of yellow paper in his hands, and was holding it close to his weak blue eyes. Oblivious to everything else, he shuffled straight across the cement walk, and was just stepping off the curb when Merton's "Indian" shouted to him.

"Here! Keep off the street, you!"

And with the words, he flashed his revolver from its holster. So quickly did he draw the gun and aim that a bullet splashed into the dust not a foot from the curb, just as Lafe set his foot to the ground.

Lafe was startled, and half fell off the high curb. But he gathered himself together and turned peevishly upon the interferer.

"Well, wait a minute, can't you, till I get across?"

And he went hurrying over in his queer dot-and-carry-one gait. Lafe was one of those serious, blundering, one-idea men who always mark time with the strawfoot when the command is hayfoot; and now, film or no film, he was going about his own affairs, which seemed to be the pressing desire to get that slip of paper cashed before its signer could become insolvent.

"Just like Lafe!" snorted Uncle Hi. "Always buttin' in where he hain't wanted."

But Lafe's action had pleased Merton mightily, and he promptly sided with the little man.

"Oh, there's plenty of time before they get into action, and anyway, they don't own the town. It seems to me that fellow is pretty reckless, and impudent, with his gun play. I didn't suppose it was necessary to carry loaded guns, in order to make such a reel-play real."

For Merton was beginning to feel very resentful of the high-handed manner in which the men were taking possession of the street, at least, before they had permission. Perhaps this peremptory air was characteristic of film folk. If so, they must be a nuisance where they were plentiful. Los Angeles must be an unpleasant place enough. He hoped Wakeup wasn't going to become popular as a "location."

So he cogitated as he watched Lafe toddle across the street.

As Lafe stepped upon the pavement, the

man who had been working at his saddle girth spoke up.

"What's your hurry, pard?" he asked, his voice carrying clearly through the still air.

Lafe paid no attention, either not hearing him or not caring to delay. He was not a talkative person, even among his friends, so perhaps he did not want to be troubled with answering.

Then the man seized him by the shoulder.

"No going in there," Merton heard him say, and this time his joviality was boisterous, and Lafe was held fast in spite of his efforts to escape.

"Why, I declare!" piped Lafe, turning on his tormentor. "By what right—"

"Didn't we tell you to stay under cover? You rubes are always messing things just as we're ready to begin shootin' a scene."

But Lafe was in no mood to be teased—never was, in fact—and the term "rube," and the man's high-handed manner, angered him. He began struggling with the "Indian," though ineffectually, like a small boy in the grasp of a larger one.

"You let me be!" he squealed. "I'll be out of sight soon as I get into the bank. Let me be, I tell you!"

For answer, the big fellow took Lafe by the shoulders and with a quick side swing of his foot tripped the frail little man and fairly tossed him on the cement walk. Such roughness aroused all Merton's sense of fair play. He could not stand quietly by and let a stranger and a ruffian maltreat an old friend and townsman.

"Stop that, you big bully! Let that man go!"

And he sprang forward to go to Lafe's aid. But he stopped as suddenly as he had started, for a bullet pinged against the curb at his very feet.

"Get into that hotel, and be quick about it!" shouted an "Indian" who wheeled his horse quickly around in front of Merton; and there was no raillery in his tone.

But it was something else that stopped Merton in his tracks—something that for an instant paralyzed him with astonishment and horror. For his rush across the sidewalk had brought him into such a position that, like a picture on the screen, through the bank window he glimpsed the most important scene of this Wild West scenario. It was "Colonel Cody," thrown into bold relief by the cross-light from a side window, flourishing a revolver at Hatton's head! That could have but one interpretation. Like a flash, Merton's mind dovetailed several substantiating bits of evidence—the advance visit, the funds for the contractor, the disguise of the men, their means for a quick get-away! At the thought, Merton cupped his hands about his mouth and megaphoned at the top of his voice:

"Robbery! They're robbing the bank! Get your guns, boys! Robbery!"

He dashed into the hotel, followed by a bullet that buried itself in the casing just as he dodged through the screen. Pandemonium broke out behind him, like an echo of his alarm. The languid afternoon crashed with the sudden thunderclaps of battle, as the "movie-men" threw off all disguise and began riding, shooting, shouting.

"Wha-at! Rob—!" stammered Uncle Hi, so astonished he had not yet realized the meaning of Merton's shouts, his excited rush, and the hubbub outside.

"Quick! The old carbine! Is she loaded? Get some bullets!"

Merton dragged the old rifle down from its post of honor on the wall halfway up the stairs. His quick action sent Uncle Hi lumbering to the little cupboard under the stairs, where he rummaged with but meagre results.

"Hain't got but three catridges here, but maybe Aunt Sate knows—"

Merton snatched the three and warning Uncle Hi to run for more, he bounded up the stairs, loading as he ran, and rushed down the hall to the front room.

Throwing the old rifle to his shoulder, Merton peered out from behind Aunt Sate's Nottingham curtains and fired at one of the "Indians" flying past.

"Missed!" he growled, for the gun carried low and the ball struck the ground beside the target.

The rider looked to see where the shot came from, turning his revolver in the

direction he looked, but of course he failed to discover Merton.

The street was in possession of the robbers. Lafe Aldrich had disappeared, likewise the two horses that had been standing in front of the bank. The man who had waylaid Lafe was now on guard at the bank door, a revolver in either hand, William Hartwise, and as menacingly. Merton reloaded and aimed, more carefully this time, but quickly.

He waited just long enough for the brass sights to rest neatly against the expanse of red flannel shirt covering the man's breast. Then he pulled the trigger. Even as he kept the bead on his man, the brass and flannel parted company. His victim sank heavily down upon the cement pavement, more naturally than a film actor has ever done it.

"Must have cut across the sub-clavian to get him that quick," Merton diagnosed briefly. "Now for that 'director' there."

The "director" had his car in motion. He had gone up the street past the hotel to the first corner north, turned, and was now coming back at great speed toward the lower end of the block where the bank stood, megaphoning above the hum of his engine and the din of the conflict:

"Hold' em off till Bill is out, then get out."

"Not before I get you," muttered Merton, reaching for his last cartridge.

While his fingers were groping impatiently in the depths of his shirt-pocket, "Bill" came plunging out of the bank, his hat off and blood trickling down one cheek, staining the snow white Colonel Cody locks waving over his shoulder. He ran toward the car coming to meet him.

But just as "Bill" leaped upon the running board, Hultgren, the hardware dealer, appeared in the doorway of his store adjoining the bank. He fired instantly, a well-aimed shot that crumpled the "director" over the wheel like a punctured bag. The car scurried diagonally down the street and brought up with a crash against a telephone pole in front of the hotel. The collision lopped off a wheel, and the car was as useless as its driver.

Two of the robbers had apparently given up the fight, and now but two were riding up and down, shooting at doors and windows as they flew past. In their frenzied and rather ineffectual dashings to and fro, they resembled the typical Wild West film; and if Merton had not seen that gun play in the bank, he could easily have imagined the men were what they pretended, and the Wakeup citizens were the real outlaws. Still, the men did more than ride madly back and forth, and, when they saw a target, shot to kill. Hultgren dodged back from his doorway just in time to escape a bullet that spattered against the wall.

"Buffalo Bill" barricaded himself in the tonneau of the car and squatted down out of Hultgren's sight. It was but an ostrich security, however, as he was almost beneath Merton's window. Merton got the old carbine loaded and ready for action, just as Hultgren darted out of his store and aimed at one of the men who was riding up the street and calling to "Bill."

Hultgren didn't see "Buffalo Bill," of course, since he was looking away from the car; but "Bill" saw him, and raised his revolver to shoot Hultgren before Hultgren could get the rider. But Merton already had a bead on "Bill" and pulled his trigger first. So the bullet intended for Hultgren only raised a splash of dust in the street. The revolver dropped with "Bill's" useless arm, shattered by the old carbine's vicious bite.

"Bill" drew back hastily and glanced behind him in mingled surprise and anger at having been attacked in that direction. When he saw no one, his astonishment was almost comical to behold.

But "Bill" was game, and though the blood was trickling from a furrow across his cheek, and his right arm was helpless, he shifted his gun to his left hand and raised it threateningly while searching for his unknown assailant, whom he suspected of being in the alley between the hotel and Lafe's printing shop.

Merton realized that before the carbine could do any more damage, he must have ammunition. He started for the door, and met Uncle Hi coming with more cartridges.

"Aunt Sate's under th' bed, but she had wits enough to remember where she'd put these at house-cleanin' time, for safe keeping," panted Uncle Hi.

Merton caught a cartridge and ran quickly back to his window, loading as he ran. He got there just in time to see Hultgren sinking limply down in his doorway, though not all the way down, for instantly Lafe Aldrich, with his green shade still over his eyes, appeared behind Hultgren and dragged him back into shelter.

One of the horses was bounding past down the street, carrying double, the rear rider's revolver still pointed at Hultgren. Another horse, evidently potted by Hultgren's shot, lay crippled in the street.

As for "Bill," finding himself abandoned, he dropped his gun and stood in the car, his good hand lifted in surrender.

Except for the débris of the conflict, the street was as quiet, though not so somnolent as it had been a few moments before. There was an unwonted tenseness about its peace, as though the little village had not yet recovered from the shock.

The battle was over; and from its opening to its close, it had occupied but eight minutes. Those figures were Lafe's, who remembered he had looked at his watch just before he started for the bank.

For all its unpreparedness, Wakeup was victorious. The bandits were routed, and the funds of the bank were intact. So Merton abandoned the carbine for the scalpel, so to speak, and did what he could for the wounded.

Poor Hatton had fared more badly than "Buffalo Bill" in their revolver duo, and lay behind the counter with a bullet through his body. Hultgren's shoulder was shattered. A block down the street was a dying noncombatant, an unarmed Scandinavian farmer who had remained on the sidewalk as though terror-tied, and had been an easy target for one of the robbers.

As counter losses, the bandits had left three men behind—the dead man on the sidewalk, the sorely wounded "director," and "Buffalo Bill."

By the time Merton returned to Johns Hopkins, the bandits, the escaped as well as the wounded, were awaiting trial. The martyred farmer had been buried, Hatton and Hultgren were on the road to recovery, and the coroner had satisfactorily disposed of the body of Merton's victim, whose brief "path of glory" had kept him from the grave. For the first medic to report with a cadaver was Merton Govett.

"Where did you get your stiff, Mert?" asked several of his classmates, each betraying the resolution to go and do likewise.

Merton shrugged his shoulders with light abandon.

"Why, I shot him."

And thereafter, in spite of his explanations, among the classmates and other students, he was generally known as "Mert the Murderer."

THREE stories in lighter vein which will appear in the January number are: THE THRIFTY DANE *by Elliott Flower,* THE PLOTTERS OF PAPITEE *by H. P. Holt,* and KARNAK *by George J. Brenn.*

THE ARRAS OF GOD

By VINCENT STARRETT

The German agent has no more chance than the master criminal; both are bound to betray themselves sooner or later. If the journalist-detective isn't on the job, somebody from Scotland Yard generally is.

On Frantzius, peering through the faint space that intervened between the green shade and the window frame, was caution personified. The tips of his immaculate gloves rested ever so lightly on the outer sill and he craned upward, a-tiptoe. It was a bit of a stretch even for a tall man. He could glimpse faintly the thin streak of light under the door of a farther room, beyond which were Everingham and the captains, DuBois and Yardley. It required little imagination to picture them leaning over the inventor's table, their heads together and under their noses the American plans.

His heels settled back softly on the turf, and with his mocking smile he turned to survey the horizon. Far to the east a great searchlight swept the night in circles of vast circumference. In its intervals the surrounding blackness was intensified. A low-lying fog was creeping up from the river, whose silver ribbon was dimly visible below. Von Frantzius cursed it, softly and fluently. A woman—a fog—a bullet—so little is required to upset the master schemes of men!

What would he not give for a cigarette! His patience never had served him better. It seemed an age before the key snapped back the doorbolt and the naval experts stepped forth. They wished the inventor a cheery good-night and without a backward glance strode away. Everingham looked after them for a moment and then turned within, but it was Von Frantzius who closed the door. The inventor had crumpled into his arms when the German's fist struck.

Everingham had been knocked out as cleanly as if he had been poleaxed, but the spy was taking no chances; something more than an assault and battery charge awaited him in the event of discovery and capture. He breathed hard in the dim hallway. Then as silently as he had sprung from the darkness he bound and gagged the unconscious man.

That Everingham lived alone was known to the spy. All that remained was to procure the precious blue papers with their curious tracings in white.

It had been a happy thought to allow the American to choose an obscure dwelling in this isolated suburb. A lesser investigator might well have failed to find him. But none suspected the presence of Von Frantzius in London.

The light in the adjoining room still burned; the door was no longer closed. Through the aperture he could see the dispatch box on the table, and in a moment he had it open.

The plans were not there; they were not in sight.

What a fool he had been. They had them, then—the officers! He might have known.

Convinced that he had guessed correctly, even though tardily, still he continued to search. He went about it relentlessly. A wall cabinet contained only bottles; a trunk, but a tangle of clothes. He flung the contents in heaps on the floor. There were letters in abundance, but for the most part they began with "My dear Jim," and ended "Lovingly, Millie." Von Frantzius did not read what occurred between.

The other rooms were similarly unproductive. Everingham could not have found his shaving mug when the spy had finished. It had been a thorough job of its kind,

conducted at an amazing speed, but as barren as a wasted life.

"Fool!" snarled the German and reached into his pocket.

He lighted the longed-for cigarette and his hands were steady for all of his quick, glittering, eyes.

With the tobacco came reflection. The man's mind became as active as his restless eyes. He reviewed the whole matter calmly from the day Metz had told him, in the Strand, of the work before him to the moment of his immediate disappointment. In the peculiar circumstances, he concluded, it was impossible that the papers could have been allowed to leave the house. Where, then—?

"Um-m!" grunted Von Frantzius, with quiet satisfaction. There was finality in his tone; it could not be otherwise.

He was right. Everingham was still unconscious, and when the spy had turned out the inventor's inner pocket he held the plans in his hand. As a problem it was childish; he was ashamed of his stupidity. The dispatch box was their vault. Everingham simply had not replaced them before seeing his visitors on their way.

The German gloated over the graceful tracings. Then he carefully extinguished the lights. Just before he passed out he lighted a second cigarette from the stub of the first. The momentary gleam lighted a young woman's portrait on the wall. Von Frantzius stopped and placed a hand over the inventor's heart. He bowed courteously in the darkness toward the spot on the wall.

"I am happy to say that he still lives, Miss Millie," said the spy, and opened the door.

The cool damp air struck soothingly on his temples as he swung down the walk. Elation perched high in his heart. The dead stub of his first cigarette he dropped into the hedge.

Suddenly he was walking more rapidly. He dropped the second cigarette as if it had burned him. A step sounded from the roadway.

As he hurried through the gate two figures approached in the darkness. They were the naval officers returning. He wondered what had induced them to come back.

"Hullo!" said one, sharply. "Who's there? Hullo-Everingham!"

Von Frantzius, taking the opposite direction, fled swiftly into the blackness ahead.

"Stop!" roared the voice behind him; but Von Frantzius only ran faster.

"See about Everingham," rasped the speaker to his companion. "I'm after this bird."

The captain was off as he spoke. He tore the heavy overcoat from his back. His revolver appeared in his hand. Von Frantzius, with a start of several hundred feet, was running at top speed expecting the bullet he knew would follow.

The sailor's weapon spat behind him, and the lead hummed past, too near for comfort. A second shot was wider, but was still uncomfortably close. Von Frantzius was the better runner of the two, and the distance between hare and hound lengthened. The spy felt sure that his pursuer's spectacular shooting was more luck than anything else, in the dark. He sensed a turning in the gloom and rounded into a cross road to the right.

Two more turns he made at hazard, trusting to his habitual good fortune to guide him aright. The sailor had stopped firing. The pursuing footsteps sounded fainter. One more turn and he lost them.

He slackened his terrific pace and breathed deeply and more freely. It had been a close call—almost the closest of his career. Behind, somewhere, the countryside was roused, no doubt. He could imagine frightened heads popping out of windows, the startled cries and questionings.

Behind, too, the loss of the plans had been discovered. The second officer had released and revived the unfortunate inventor. Everingham was sitting up, holding his head. He could tell nothing; after his farewell to the captains on the doorstep he remembered nothing.

"Well, don't worry," advised the second officer, Yardley. "He can't go far, even if he escapes DuBois. There'll be a hundred men looking for him before he can reach London."

He stepped to a telephone on the wall and talked rapidly for some time. He smiled as he hung up the receiver. "He has no more chance than a rabbit! Every road into London will be watched."

VON FRANTZIUS was smiling, now, as he walked through the black streets of a strange village; but he must be careful as never before. As well as the two captains he knew that every cowpath would be sentineled against his coming. Yet he must head for London, and— By the way, where *was* London?

He stopped short and tried to place his whereabouts. Occasional cottages bulked in the gloom and there was an odor of the country all about him. It was rural England, true enough; yet he must be within an hour of the capital, no matter in what direction it lay. He walked slowly forward.

In the rear of a white dwelling that sprang at him out of the darkness a low light glimmered. Its flickerings threw weird shadows on the blind. He surveyed it with calm deliberation. Should he risk knocking? It might be his only opportunity to get directions. It seemed to him that there had just been a movement of one of the front blinds.

The front door opened quickly and a woman came running down the steps. It was too late now to retreat. She was at the gate as he reached it, and he made as if to pass on.

"Bullen!" she cried, sharply. "None of that!" she added, somewhat querulously. "You are very late."

"Yes," he replied grimly, hoping his voice would show her the mistake she had made.

She peered hard at him, but with no trace of embarrassment. "Come in at once," she ordered.

Von Frantzius collected his wits sharply. He had faltered. Caution bade him state his business, receive his directions and be gone. Apparently she read something of his thoughts.

"I know you, Bullen, and your tricks," snapped the virago. "If you attempt to run I'll scream and wake up the neighborhood!"

With a gesture he turned in at the gate and followed her up the steps. At the door she said again, monotonously: "You are very late."

"Too late?" Von Frantzius pleasantly inquired.

The woman at his side shivered in the dark hall. "I hope not," she murmured, "but she expected you an hour ago. You are very late." The remark was an obsession. "Come this way."

The German at her heels, they groped to a back room, where on a table a guttering candle flamed. Its beams revealed a woman lying on a narrow bed. Her wasted form was outlined sharply through the coverings. Her face told of an early end to her ills.

"She expected you an hour ago," insisted the woman who had guided him. "Now she doesn't know you. I am a neighbor."

Von Frantzius, awed, wondered vaguely if he was supposed to be the husband or the son of the dying woman. He looked inquiringly at the other.

"She is dying," he said. "You know that?"

"Dying—yes!" flashed the neighbor. "She's been *that* ever since you left her. But it's Tom that killed her."

"Tom," he echoed densely. "Tom?"

"Your son, you fool! He was killed in the war. Ah, that makes you wince, does it?"

Von Frantzius understood. So, he was the husband of this poor creature. And he had left her some time previously—certainly before she knew this neighbor, else the latter would have exclaimed at his appearance.

"I am sorry," he muttered in a low tone. "I did not know."

"Sorry, is it?" snapped the neighbor at his elbow. "Well, it's too late for you to be, sorry, my man! All you can do now—"

The woman on the bed opened her eyes slowly and fixed them on the spy. He drew forward and allowed her to feast them on his face. Slowly the spectre drew herself up and confronted him. In the poor light he doubted that she would

be able, even in her senses, to say he was not her husband. A low cry escaped her.

"You're there, are you, Tom Bullen?" she said wearily. "Well, you see what's left of me. And Tom's gone, too—that's what did for me, Bullen! You can take no credit to yourself. The Germans—damn them!—have killed Tom, and they've buried my heart with him under the sod. O Tom, Tom!"

Her frail body shook with dry sobs, which suddenly ceased. Her eyes burned feverishly into his.

"Bullen," she went on in a burst of uncanny laughter, "if I could begin again I'd marry a better man than you—the Lord love him!—and raise him kids—yes, kids by the dozen! And with their mother's milk I'd teach them to hate you—*you*, Bullen, and the damned Germans!"

She fell back exhausted, and the neighbor tugged sharply at his sleeve.

"She ain't here for long," the woman said quickly. "You can see that yourself. You'd better go, Bullen, for you're only exciting her." She added, almost apologetically, "She's pretty bad on the Germans."

"I see," said Von Frantzius drily. "She must be congratulated on her feelings. They do her credit."

The woman stared at him for that speech, and without reply accompanied him to the door. He started down the steps, but turned to ask the direction he needed. As he opened his lips a cab rattled round a turn up the road and came toward them. It stopped before the door.

From the depths stepped a lurching figure, and a man stumbled up the path.

"Hi!" called the German to the driver. "Wait a minute!" To the other man he said, quickly and savagely, "Are you Bullen?" And in reply to the staring affirmation, "Get into the house quick, then, you drunken ape! I am the doctor," he told the cabby, in smooth tones. "I want to get back to town quickly."

The driver scratched his head with the butt of his whip and peered at his new fare through the gloom.

"Now, I'm sorry, doctor," he said, at length. "I can't take you all the way. Nasty fog coming up, sir, and I have to get home. But my stable's on the outskirts, and I'll take you as far's I can. Hop in, sir. Won't cost you a penny!"

Von Frantzius did not argue the matter. Already he had wasted more time than was good for him, although through no fault of his own. He was inclined to curse the chance that had led him into the house, but the woman's words sat heavy upon him and precluded coherent thought at the moment. He flung himself back into the cushions and stared blankly through the windows at the outside blackness.

As they turned into a cross road he bent forward and glared savagely ahead. Before them, far away, a tiny line of lights had broken through the night, winking and flickering like fireflies. Toward these they were heading. But before them was gathering the gray shroud of fog that had merited his blasphemy at the cottage of the unhappy inventor. It perturbed him more than he cared to admit. Of a certainty, reflected the efficient German morosely, he must soon reach a place that he knew.

In spite of all, a half smile of triumph sat on his lips as they reached the edge of the city. His confidence had returned, and while the end was not yet, he entertained no fears for the future.

"I'll get down here," he announced to the driver, on whom he forced a small fare. He looked about him. The cab rattled away into the graying night.

A few shop lights shone ghostily through the murk of fog, which already had begun to settle. Occasional pedestrians hurried past, intent on reaching their firesides. The spy pushed forward doggedly in the general direction of the hotel district.

The tall form of a policeman broke through the gathering grayness. Von Frantzius slackened his stride and stopped him.

"Have you a match?" he courteously asked; and when the man had produced one, remarked, "A bad night."

"Bad is the word, sir," agreed the Bobby, "and going to be worse." He cast an apprehensive eye about him. "We're

in for as bad a night of fog as ever we had, or I'm no prophet. I'm thinking you'd better be getting home quickly."

"I think so," laughed the German. "I suppose I can get a cab hereabouts?"

"I'm doubting it," smiled the good humored bluecoat, "but half a mile farther on there's a stand—if you can make it before the fog shuts down. Were you going far?"

"Far enough!" Von Frantzius's infectious laugh rippled again. "Well, I'll chance it. Good night!"

He had not dared to ask the officer where he was, and he was convinced that he had not met him any too soon. It was likely the policeman would be told to watch for the spy the next time he reported. Oh, for a cab—if he could only get a cab—

He plunged ahead into the fog, which had thickened.

The German could barely make out objects ten feet distant. Twice he stepped off the sidewalk, and each time he used the strongest oaths contained in his extensive English vocabulary. The strain was beginning to tell on his nerves, iron though they were. His temper was becoming ragged. Most of all, he was becoming furiously angry because so many obstacles had arisen almost at the instant of his success. The fog had caused him his first annoyance; was it to end the adventure in a manner painful to contemplate?

The walk and the trees were confusing, and there were now no lights to guide his alien steps. Was he walking eastward? And how far was he from the roaring center of the city? From the river? Might he not walk into it? The cabstand—he must have passed it.

Captain Von Frantzius came to the full realization that he was hopelessly lost. The policeman had been right; probably no denser fog ever had closed around the world's center. He stopped short in his tracks.

Captain Von Frantzius had been prepared from the beginning to match his matchless wits against any in England, but he had not considered the intervention of nature. His shrewd mind had preconstructed and considered all seeming possibilities, save only this one. With his efficiency and his habit of painstaking detail he had prepared himself for any and all emergencies, but one small matter he had neglected. That was to read the weather report before adventuring forth.

Must he shout for help? Must he blunder to someone's door and ask directions, like a child? He had heard of guides with lanterns in these cursed London fogs, but Diogenes himself could not pick a path through that hellish mist!

He stumbled forward a step or two and stopped again. He groped forward a number of yards, falteringly, feeling his way with the caution of a strange and new-born timidity. For perhaps the sixth time he blundered into a post, and this time he clung to it as if fearful of falling. The horror of the fog had him fast in its weird embrace.

How long that singular condition lasted Van Frantzius did not know. But suddenly he knew that the peculiar giddiness had passed. He was cold and numb, but wide awake. Instantly he was aware that someone was approaching.

At first faintly, and then more clearly, came a curious sound—a queer, hollow, tapping sound—somewhere ahead, like the irregular clicking of a telegraph key. It sounded as if metal struck upon metal—or stone. Then more clearly out of the mist came a "tap, tap, tap," and a footstep, slow and shuffling, but human. With fascinated eyes Von Frantzius stared into the white gloom. Through the curtain of fog before him stepped a strange figure.

From the cavernous depths of a seedy greatcoat projected a human head, surmounted by a disreputable felt hat. The figure's throat was wound round and round with a knitted blue muffler, and great blue goggles over its eyes gave it a sepulchral appearance in the gray-black light. It stopped before the spy.

"A blind man!" gasped Von Frantzius. Simultaneously, the great idea seized him.

"Ay, blind," quoth the sightless one, hollowly, "but I knew you before you were aware of me."

"Knew me?" Von Frantzius echoed the words in genuine surprise, and with some apprehension.

"Only of your presence. It is a curious faculty of the blind. You are lost?"

"Utterly!" The German's prompt answer brought a smile to the old man's lips.

"Hm-m," he mused. "Of course—"

"You can lead me out? I had thought of it. For you there is no fog—poor fellow—no sun! You are to be my saviour!"

"My poor young man," said the blind man. "Do you need a savior?"

The spy laughed. "I welcome one. The fact is, I am hours overdue at the club. It is distressing, for a most important interview doubtless has ceased now to be possible to-night. Yet I must be sure. Will you lead me? I will gladly pay you for your trouble."

"And I am a poor man," mused the other. "I will trust to your generosity."

"You will not regret it." The spy placed his left arm through the blind man's right. "Come, let us hasten."

"And yet I do not know you," hesitated the blind man. "Perhaps it would be as well—"

"My name is Courtney," said Von Frantzius. "I assure you I shall not abscond with your purse."

"I do not fear it, but may I touch your face? You need not shrink; I am no leper. It is but my way of seeing. My fingers are my eyes; as keen as your own, perhaps."

His cold fingers passed swiftly over the German's features. They lingered on the red scar that marred the cheek. In spite of himself Von Frantzius shuddered. The man's fingers felt clammy, his touch poisonous.

"Come!" he said roughly. "Enough of your foolery. I have no time for it. Have we far to go?"

"Where do you go?" queried the blind man. "You have not said. The Denison? Good! Half an hour will do it. I fear we cannot hope to get a cab to-night. You have been a soldier?"

"The devil I have!" snapped the German. "What makes you say so? Oh, I see—the scar! Yes, I was in South Africa. I fear it has spoiled my beauty. I received it at Colenso."

They trod slowly through the clinging mist, taking the direction from which the miraculous guide had appeared.

"And what do they call you?" queried Van Frantzius. He was becoming more cordial.

"Me? Well, my name is Clydebank, but I've almost forgotten it. You can call me Oliver, as most of them do. And many a lost man has Old Oliver led home!"

"Indeed!" the spy was politely interested.

The raw, damp fog precluded extended conversation, had Von Frantzius been in the mood for it. They progressed in silence for the most part, and painfully, too, for Blind Oliver, as he called himself, could meander only with lagging steps. Yet, galled as he was by their tardy advance, the German could not well protest. The alternative of trying it alone again was not attractive.

Arm in arm the strangely assorted pair entered the district of heavier traffic. Yet that, like business, was nearly at a standstill. There were no speeding autos, no scurrying hansoms. It was even possible to cross the Strand at a slow walk, the fog still clung like a garment, and the lights shone feebly as through a gauze.

One lurid light stood forth in startling isolation at the door of a great building. It was beneath this glow that Von Frantzius had the misfortune to collide with a man who had just emerged from the doorway. The other's apologies were profuse. The German's were cut short by a sudden emotion; it arose from his recognition of the other man.

For some time he walked the blind man at a pace that person had not attained for years. Oliver protested.

"Sorry," said Von Frantzius, shortly. "I just now collided with a man I had not seen for years. I didn't want to see him, and I don't now. If he follows there'll be a fight. He's an old enemy. Is there no place near here where we can turn into a quieter thoroughfare?"

The spy had not been slow to recognize Darwin, of the secret service, and he

hardly dared flatter himself that Darwin had failed to recognize him. He turned an ear backward. Were there footsteps following? He could not be sure. Yet it would be incredible if Darwin had not known him. But why had the secret agent not raised a hue and cry on the spot?"

"Come on," he roughly ordered. "I'm afraid the fellow's following. I must get away from this neighborhood."

"Not to fast," panted the blind man. "I can't walk that fast."

"You have to," callously said the spy. He took a firmer hold on the arm of his feeble guide. Then, as he blundered into a standing sign: "Damn!"

"Wait!" gasped the old man. "A few minutes now and we'll come to a place I know. We can hurry through a building and come out on the next street. But I must go more slowly!"

"As fast as you can, then." They decreased their speed a bit.

"Here," presently said Oliver. "Two doors beyond this. I don't know who you are, but I'll help you. It's enough that you're in trouble. Quick, now! In here and right through the other side."

He fumbled for a door and flung it open.

"No noise," whispered the spy as they passed through. With an expert movement he brushed his hand past the other's pockets, and then was inclined to feel ashamed of himself. For a moment he had been suspicious; but it was evident the old man carried no arms.

The passage they had entered was dark as the pit. They groped ahead, Von Frantzius clinging to the arm of his companion. They made a short turn. In the darkness ahead a thin low line of light evidenced a door leading to a lighted room beyond.

"Right through," reiterated the blind man. "Only the night watchman there. I know him—he is my cousin."

He swung the door back and pushed the spy through before him. In the sudden blaze of light Von Frantzius blinked owlishly, but pushed on. The blind man laughed suddenly.

It took three men to subdue the German. The room was full of men, had more been necessary. Among them was Darwin.

The blind man had removed his spectacles, and Von Frantzius could see that he really was blind. In the first flash of the consciousness of his amazing folly it had been his initial doubt.

From his manacled wrists he glanced about tigerishly at the smiling group that confronted him. He mastered a feverish desire to strangle his traitorous guide, and bowed.

"A den of thieves, perhaps?" he ventured.

It was the blind man who responded: "This is a division of Scotland Yard, of which I happen to be a humble and patriotic agent. You were doomed from the first, Captain. My meeting with you was not accident; I was in that spot by careful and deliberate prearrangement. Had you taken another road the result would have been the same, save that you would have fallen captive to another man." He smiled and resumed his blue spectacles.

"Your honorable scar, Herr Von Frantzius, is too well known for you to carry it abroad in England, even within the sight of blind men!"

UNCLE PETE'S WIFE

By F. RONEY WEIR

The arrival of Uncle Pete's wife marks a return to primitive modes of living for the Raus family; and her thoughtful little act following her departure, more than the abnormal state of the household during her stay, keeps the memory of her visit green.

ILLIE Raus whirled his car dexterously to the curb in front of his father's place of business and left it in the hands of his chum while he went in to greet his mother, whose flushed face peered up at him from a tangle of customers as he entered. He pushed his way haughtily between old Comstock, who was there in the interests of the delicatessen around the corner, and some children who were waiting to buy cookies.

Willie was well dressed. Certain young women—very young—thought him handsome, and admired the Chalmer-six manner with which he drove his Ford. If his father's business kept up to its present satisfactory standard Willie hoped for a larger car, and there was no harm in acquiring the air.

"Villie!" called his mother sharply, as he worked his way towards the back of the store in the direction of the cash register, "go into the back room; your papa want to speak mit you."

"I haven't time, Mama. Jack Hogan and I are going out to the Springs. Give me five dollars, can't you, Mama? I'm in a hurry." He hauled forth a perfectly up-to-date timepiece and noted the hour.

His mother came close to him and buzzed something in his ear.

"What's the matter with the old man?" he demanded in return. But he dove into the back part of the establishment and presently came forth again on his way to the store.

"I can't go, Jack," he informed his waiting chum. "Take the car around to the garage for me, will you? Maybe we can frame up something for to-morrow. The old folks won't deliver the goods to-day, and I am shy—you know that. Perhaps to-morrow."

His chum took his place at the wheel in sulky disappointment, and Willie returned to the interview with his father.

"What's to pay, Papa?" he inquired rather respectfully, with the memory of a late escapade or two in his mind. Could it be that the old man had heard?—but no, that wasn't likely. Or perhaps Mama had turned traitor at last and told about that shortage in the cash drawer. Young fellows must have a little change for running expenses.

"Matter enough!" began his father explosively. "Come on in and shut the door vare dem fried-cake fools can't hear. I've got someding putty bad to tell you, Villie." Willie was too much alarmed even to note the thickening of his father's deplorable accent, always more pronounced in moments of excitement. Willie feared he was in for a bad half hour.

"Your Uncle Pete's vife is to come this afdernoon!"

Willie's relief was so great it was positively disdainful.

"My goodness, Papa, is that all? One would think there had been a murder."

"But vait, vait!" cried his father pushing him backward into a chair. "Vot is she coming for?"

"To make a visit, I suppose; and I also suppose you want me to drive to the station for the old lady."

"Nein, nein, I don't vant you should show up that gas vagon of yours. No, not vunce vile dot voman is on my house!"

"Don't say 'on your house,' Papa. Uncle Pete's wife won't sit on the shingles. Say, 'in your house.'"

"It's nice for you to be smart, ain'dt it? But your Uncle Pete's vife maybe vill take the house, shingles and all—yes, und the shtore, und the pake ofens!"

"Is that so! I should like to see her do it!" Young William's lip curled in disdain. He was taking a law course; had been at it now nearly a month, and often astonished his parents with his knowledge of legal matters.

"You don't think she could do it, eh?" inquired the elder Raus, eyeing his son hopefully. He was a small man with shifty blue eyes and a fringe of dry blond hair lingering about an ever-increasing plateau.

"Why should she?"

"I vill tell you, Villie; there was a bargain. Your Uncle Peter und me, ve had just that old stone pile of a farm in Wisconsin. Ve got not enough to pay funeral expenses off that blase—not never! Ve make a bargain; vun should take his vife und go Vest, the odder should took his vife und shtay on the farm und work und keep the odder feller a-going out Vest till he makes somedings. Den dey should divide up. Your mama und I come Vest, ve make someding mit a pakery. Effery dree months your Uncle Pete he send out money—not so much, but some. Den Mama und I ve see it vas better dot bargain vas someding else; you see, Villie? The pakery comes on so putty goot, your mama und I, ve like it your Uncle Pete he keep the farm und ve keep the pakery; you see, Villie?"

Willie nodded. He could see with the naked eye. "Were there any papers?" he inquired with his best legal manner.

"No, your Uncle Pete und me vas relations togedder—ve don't need no bapers. Ve make it mit our mouths, dot is all."

Willie laughed. He felt in his pocket for a cigarette, and then, remembering his father's prejudice against the habit, brought forth a toothpick.

"Don't let Uncle Pete nor Uncle Pete's wife worry you, Papa. They are helpless. The farm belongs to Uncle Pete, the bakery business to you and Mama. How much did Uncle Pete send you altogether?"

"I dink four hundert tollars."

"You had better refund that four hundred dollars."

"You think she vill took 'em?"

Willie laughed again. "If she doesn't she's foolish. She can't get anything else."

"If it vos dot old von of your Uncle Pete's, I vouldn't vorry. But she iss deadt already, und dis iss an American von. Und, Villie, dem Yankee vomen iss dishonest—yes-siree!"

Willie absented himself during the early part of the afternoon. When he returned, his aunt-by-marriage had arrived and was installed in a changed and meagre-looking sitting room. The cheery red-and-green rug which had brightened the floor was not in evidence. Its absence gave the apartment a wide and barren chilliness. The talking machine was evidently off for a vacation. Willie was provoked at his parents' unnecessary caution in this matter. He would have liked, through the medium of his beloved instrument, to sing some of his favorite rag-time pieces to his astonished country relative. Always, when he sat by and wound the thing he had the proud sensation of doing the singing himself. The spread had been snatched from the table, and "Pharaoh's Horses" and three enlarged photographs of the family, in ornate frames, were gone from the walls. Faint, rectangular accentuations of pink appeared in the wall paper to mark where they had been. It was astonishing what a change these few removals had made. It took Willie back to his childhood, when papa did his own baking, and mama was both tailor and barber. His mother in moth-eaten, out-of-date skirt and calico waist, was sadly arranging a skimpy meal on the dining table. When she summoned her husband his appearance of woe-begone poverty and over-work was startling. He resembled one of his own cookies, flour dusted, brown, warm. Willie in his natty tweed suit, correct hat, tie and pumps cut to display a conventional glimpse of silk hose, was altogether out of the picture, and gloried in it. There was no sense in the old folks making such guys of themselves. It would serve them right if he should call out, "Mama, where is the talking machine?"

His aunt was seated in a chair which had been discarded and stowed in the shed on the alley two years ago. Raus Senior had dragged it forth last summer to use in the back yard. There the wind and weather had pretty nearly done for it, and now here it was again, with company occupying it.

Uncle Pete's wife was not bad looking. Willie was obliged to admit that, although heartily disliking her for coming to meddle with affairs which were none of her business. Her hair, although somewhat gray, was abundant and rolled loosely back from a smooth, quiet, and entirely noncommittal face. She smiled up at him in a manner which might have won him, had it not been for his knowledge of her errand. Her eyes seemed to see everything, yet revealed nothing. Her dull, mulberry-colored suit with its striped silk trimmings and fluffy white collar was, as Willie well knew, in perfect taste; such taste as his mother, who spent a good deal on dress, might never hope to attain. Uncle Pete's wife was certainly no slouch. Suddenly, for all his legal learning, Willie felt afraid of her, felt that his father and mother were justified in the masquerade they had assumed to fool her. He doubted if it really fooled her. Those appraising eyes seemed to read the story of that assumed shabbiness from introduction to finis. The most terrifying symptom of all was the fact that during dinner she never broached the subject of business, but listened sympathetically to the almost too eager tales of poverty and hard luck. When she retired at night she had not mentioned it. Her presence was a dark cloud lowering over the family of Raus from which at any moment the lightning of a settlement proposition might glitter forth to destroy.

The next day, for the first time in their lives, the Rauses deplored the crush of customers in the shop. It really seemed as if everybody in the city needed pies and bread and cookies and ginger cake. Mrs. Raus, in her shabby skirt and calico waist, flew about waiting on the trade, beads of perspiration on her forehead and across her upper lip. Uncle Pete's wife offered to help and did, despite futile efforts to prevent. In a crisp white dress she went about all day, doing up parcels with neatness and dispatch. On the third day of her visit Mr. Raus commanded Willie and Mama to take "Aunt Letty" out to see the sights.

"You must come on der park," he pleaded with tears in his voice.

"And leave you alone with so much business to attend to?" demanded Mrs. Pete Raus. "Oh, that wouldn't be fair! Besides I am much more interested in the bakery than I would be in the finest park in the world."

Interested in the bakery! No doubt she was.

"Oh, my goodness!" cried Raus to his wife, "I vish Pete's first vife vas lived. She ain'dt so fancy, budt she vas a goot milker, und didn't vas too smardt to shtay var she vas!"

But the fact remained that she was dead, and Pete had married for his second wife one who was interested in the bakery business.

Five days passed, yet Mrs. Pete Raus had not mentioned that ancient Raus bargain. The strain was getting almost too much for the Rauses to bear. The car was rusting in the garage of a friend, the talking machine, the rug, the pictures, and the other movable luxuries were still in hiding, but the business boomed with unmistakable and continuous volume. In the face of such activity there was not much use in lying. Mrs. Pete would either scout their hard luck story or lay it up to niggardliness.

"How is it, Mama, if Uncle Pete's farm is no good, that his wife comes out here looking like the leading lady in a play?" demanded Willie.

"That dress ain'dt cost so much—shoes und all—yes, und hat und coat—as my best hat!" hissed Willie's mother in reply. "Und yet I don't can bring it out of its box alreatty because them aigrettes is worth a lot of money. Oh, dear, why ain'dt she go home or say something? If ve got to fight I like to do idt und have idt done! I want to wear my new hat before it is all behind!"

"And I want to drive the car," responded

Willie. "Come on, Mama, what's the use! You ain't fooling Uncle Pete's wife a little bit. She has stuck right in the shop. She ain't blind. Let's put the rug back on the floor, and have some decent meat again. You tell Papa what I say. Why, she may stay all summer. She can't do anything; she hasn't any writing to show. All she can claim is that four hundred dollars that Uncle Pete has lent Papa. We make that clear in a month in the shop—"

"Sh-h-h!" warned his mother.

"Tell her," went on Willie, "that she is welcome to that four hundred and the interest, but we are not going to pay attention to any old pipe dream of Uncle Pete's about divvyin' up the business. She can't hold us, I know, because I've just gone over *Contracts* in my law course. You tell Papa to give her the money and the interest and sign over his share in that old rock pile back there. Then, when she sees it is all off, she'll go home and we can get back to livin'."

That night Mr. and Mrs. Raus talked the matter over exhaustively in their room. The guest room adjoined theirs, and the partition was thin, but the Rauses spoke in German; there was no especial need of caution. Before they slept Mrs. Raus had convinced her husband of the soundness of their son's legal advice.

Mr. Raus opened the matter boldly. Following the example of his warlike countrymen, he assumed the offensive. He smashed through wire entanglements of English, destroying verbs and adjectives in his mad assault, but he made it very plain to the crushed lady that he did not mean to stand by the bargain which had been made back in Wisconsin. He would pay the money which Pete had advanced, with interest at six per cent. He would renounce all right and title to the farm willingly, gladly. But to hand over one half of the bakery business which he had worked so hard to establish (poor as it was) he would not!

The visitor sat with her hands clasped in her lap during the battle. Willie, listening at the back door, and wincing at his father's bloody treatment of the English language, and Mrs. Raus at the parlor door, both expected the boom of answering artillery when Uncle Pete's wife should reply. But all they heard was Uncle Pete's wife saying, with a trembling sigh, "Well, Pete will be somewhat surprised when I tell him."

"Vell, so iss it!" roared Mr. Raus. "Und so I make oudt writings, und my Villie shall bring a lawyer on this house, und you don't got anyding off me *aber* you shtay a hundert und fifty years!"

"Very well," answered the lady meekly, and the listeners at either door fell back in astonishment at the ease with which the doughty general had won the fight. After all, a woman might be good to look at in a nice, middle-aged way, might dress with taste, be an American, have sharp eyes, and still be easy to vanquish. Willie "vent quick on der lawyer."

In time Uncle Pete returned the papers signed in proper legal form, releasing Wilhelm Raus from all obligations to Peter Raus so far as the Raus bakery was concerned, and vesting all right and title to the Wisconsin farm in Peter Raus, his heirs and assigns forever. The four hundred dollars with interest up to date was paid over to Mrs. Pete Raus, and that lady announced her intention of bringing her visit to a close.

Willie was really disappointed. Now that everything was settled beyond dispute, he would have liked to show off a little before this quiet, handsome, sharp-eyed American aunt of his. He wondered how his Uncle Pete had managed to catch such a fine, stately bird, so different from the bedraggled old domestic fowl who had been Pete's first wife. He would have liked to have his mother unearth the rugs and carpets, the bric-a-brac and the talking machine; wear the hat with the twenty-five dollar bunch of aigrettes (acquired at a last year's end-of-the-season sale, to be sure, but of undeniable value). He would have liked introducing Mrs. Peter Raus to his crowd—to let her see that in place of being the poor underling bakery people his parents had taken such pains to exhibit to her, he at least, had some standing in society. But she would not stay at all. She seemed to be in haste to get home to

Uncle Pete and make the humiliating confession of her defeat.

Willie took her to the station in his car.

"It's a very nice car," she said admiringly, and without, so far as Willie could discern, a shadow of envy or ill-feeling. In fact, she had not displayed a symptom of either of these emotions during the entire period of her visit. Instead, she invited the Rauses to come to Wisconsin, repeating the invitation heartily as she shook hands with her nephew at the station.

"We shall really expect you all to come and return my visit. We will do everything in our power to make you have a good time. I am so glad to find your father and mother so prosperous. The bakery business is a very good business, isn't it?"

"Well I should say so," acknowledged Willie, from his position of positive safety. "Dad makes loads of money. Of course he had to work pretty hard in the past, but he don't have to work so hard any more if he'd only think so."

"Of course not," agreed Aunt Letty sweetly.

The last glimpse Willie had of his aunt through the car window left with him an impression of a smiling, almost triumphant, lady.

"Well she is a big fool," he commented, and whenever he thought of his Uncle Pete's wife afterwards he recalled that amused, triumphant smile which had been upon her face as her train pulled out of the station.

When he reached the bakery he found his parents indulging in a sort of jubilation while they replaced the rugs, rehung the pictures and brought forth the talking machine.

"Dead easy, wasn't she?" chortled Willie, as he adjusted a record and started the machine. "Easier than Uncle Pete's old one would have been."

"Yes," assented his mother comfortably, "I'm glad Pete sent her instead of coming himself. Papa says we couldn't have fooled Pete that way about business."

A few days later came an envelope containing a clipping from the leading paper of the growing city near which the old Raus place was situated. Willie read it aloud to his father and mother:

"The King City Golf Club has just acquired the farm known as the old Raus Homestead; and although the price was high—one hundred thousand dollars—the organization is to be congraulated upon its acquisition. As a farm the land was of little value, the soil being thin and stony, but for golf links it is ideal. The lay of the land—"

There was quite a bit more describing the topographical advantages of the Raus place for the game of golf, but the scrap fell from Willie's hand as his father uttered a choking noise as if he had swallowed a dry biscuit and it had stuck in his throat. His face had turned a greenish hue, and he dashed to the floor a baking tin which he happened to be holding at the time, the better to clutch the imaginary hair of his brother Pete's perfidious wife.

"If dot voman set on my house again—I—kill her—yes sir!" he hissed.

"She won't 'set on your house again,'" sneered Willie, "she's done her setting and her hatching. And now listen here, Papa, I bet you she came out here intending to tell us the whole scheme and divy up. She didn't look like a trickster, that woman of Uncle Pete's didn't, but she found out right away that we were playing her for squirrel bait and she cinched us; that's what she did!"

"Squirrel bait?" demanded Raus of his more learned son. "Vot is dot—squirrel bait?"

"If you don't know, Papa," replied Willie, "you go look in the glass!"

A MARTYR TO SCIENCE

By JAMES A. BALES

By a single scientific stroke, Mr. Frawley renders powerless, temporarily, the entire machinery of the government for the protection of society But his application of scientific principles fails for some reason to impress his profit-sharing and less intellectual fellow-worker.

DESPITE the darkness "Dude" Frawley dexterously climbed the small sapling which had been cut off in its youth to serve as a pole for the Grass Valley Rural Telephone line. One snip of his pliers severed the wire. He slid easily to the ground and crossed the road to where a stocky young man stood waiting.

"Science, Andrew, science—the marvel of man's advancement," Mr. Frawley murmured in the low-pitched tone of the true believer.

"Aw fergit it," grumbled his companion. "What's science got to do with cuttin' a phone wire? Any boob can do that. My idea of science'd be to make something like a phone instead of just puttin' it out of business."

"Right again, Andrew," commented the scientist. "You're always good for one of those prefectly obvious deductions. In this case, however, you lack even your customary penetration. Inventions like the telephone, or the thousand and one other discoveries that ease or burden our age, do not constitute science. You should remember—or learn—Spencer's definition, which, roughly, is that science is the knowledge of the people, classified. In other words, science is of the mind, and these mechanical accomplishments are merely the exterior evidence of man's mental growth in that field."

"Well, what's that got to do with our job? Le's go."

"In the middle of a lecture? How little you know me, Andrew. Now, to resume, science being of the mind, it was scientific for me to overcome with that small stroke not only the great genius of the inventor, but, for our purposes at least, the entire machinery of the government, from president down to the whiskered sheriff in yonder hamlet. That is knowledge classified and applied, and no more can be said of any invention on earth."

"Yea, you're a wise guy, all right, if anybody asks you. And I ain't sayin' I don't need no teachin' along that line. But that ain't what we're here for. We gotta turn this trick and be somewheres else before mornin'."

"True, my boy, too true. It is the age of business. Philosophy and poesy, which by the way, are only manifestations of the brain's development in yet other fields, are subordinated to the demands of trade."

Replacing the pliers in a small tool kit which he carried in an inside coat pocket, Mr. Frawley took up the journey beside his companion. They soon approached a group of farm buildings, from the larger of which a single light gleamed. The stocky man halted.

"What if the men folks should happen to be at home?" he questioned.

"Aye, what indeed? What if there hadn't been lightning when Benjamin Franklin made his famous experiment in electricity? He simply chose a moment when there was lightning, and I have profited by his forethought. Knowledge—"

"Oh, cheese it."

"As you will, Andrew. There are none so ignorant as those who will not learn. I have only these final instructions to offer: If you so much as speak harshly to these women it will cost you money when we settle up; if you should lay a hand on either you will lose your entire share, and if you should go further—well, Andrew, I

do not care to dwell upon that contingency."

Andrew made a surly shrug of acquiescence and the men walked on to the house. Mr. Frawley confidently inserted a key in the lock on the door. Sounds of sudden moves came from inside.

"Who is there?" a feminine voice said, sharply.

The key having worked, Mr. Frawley briskly opened the door and stepped in, followed by Andrew.

"Only a weary wayfaring man," he replied.

Two women, evidently mother and daughter, occupied the room. Both had risen, but were too astonished to speak at first. Finally the elder woman regained control of herself.

"Who are you and what do you want?" she demanded.

"I will be brief and to the point," prommised Mr. Frawley. "My companion and I are men of education and expensive tastes. Unfortunately our schooling has not been such as would fit us to earn a living up to our standard in any of the legitimate forms of business and we have therefore turned to burglary for a livelihood.

"I shall not ask you to give us 'the keys' nor for information regarding any 'secret hiding place.' The little safe is our objective and we have means of opening it. I hope you will seat yourselves and remain at ease. You are quite safe, I assure you."

"You're a common thief—you, with your education and smooth talk," suddenly stormed the girl. "And you're low enough to steal from women."

"Only technically, if you please; the pelf we hope for belongs to your father, the opulent owner of this big ranch, and he is better able to bear a trifling loss than my companion and I are to endure poverty."

"It's stealing, just the same—low down stealing."

"I only wish I had the time to discuss economic theories, or any other subject, with you, my dear girl. I should enjoy it, I know. But just now I cannot gratify that wish. Andrew, please open the safe."

In three minutes Andrew had it open. Within there were two bank checks, one for $1,470.63 and another for $89. The cash totaled $170 in currency and $21 in silver.

"Ain't that a hell of a haul?" bitterly commented the cracksman.

"Andrew! No more such talk. Remember there are ladies present."

"Yes, and this is gettin' to be a ladies game, believe me."

"Well, Andrew, you're right, as usual. The science of banking offers too strong competition for us. The old individual incentive that made our profession attractive has been killed by these great combinations. Yes, you might say the banks have replaced us. However, you may give me what cash there is, and we shall be on our way."

As Andrew placed the money in a small bag, there came from the road the unmistakable chug of a well known motor propelled vehicle. The rattle ceased. It was evident the vehicle had stopped.

The women quickly arose.

"George," exclaimed the girl.

"Dr. Carson," her mother echoed.

"Ah, a guest," Mr. Frawley observed. "We will not intrude. Farewell, ladies; you will pardon us, I'm sure, if we leave by the rear entrance. Come, Andrew."

Dr. Carson rapped and the door was opened by a young woman who literally leaped into his arms.

"Oh, George," she sobbed.

Her act was a consummation George had devoutly wished, but had scarcely expected. Welcoming his lady with a tremendous hug, he was assailed by the older woman, who also clung to him.

The doctor had a large heart and two arms. Encircling one woman with each arm, he pressed both to him, giving himself over to the enjoyment of the moment rather than to any questioning as to the causes. The women held on to him in an abandonment of relaxation.

They were brought back to earth by the noisy rattle of the engine in the doctor's conveyance.

"My car!" he cried.

"It's the burglars," cried the mother hysterically.

"Two of them," the girl added.

George was a man of action. "Where's a gun?" he shouted.

The girl sped to an adjoining room and returned with a rifle. George raced to the door. The auto was just getting under way. He blazed away with the gun, and the driver shifted into high with his foot on the accelerator. George emptied the magazine in vain bombardment.

"That person evidently resents our use of this tin chariot, Andrew," remarked Mr. Frawley as he guided the bounding car over the rough road. "There was no taxi in sight, however, and I was in a hurry to get away from there. I trust you will admit my knowledge of the science of motoring was a vast aid in our enterprise."

Andrew was huddled down in a frightened effort to protect himself from flying bullets. He gazed at Frawley in wonder.

"Say, you're nutty," he ejaculated.

"No, Andrew, only calm and resourceful in danger. You should show more gratitude to your rescuer."

"You ain't rescued me yet. That guy with that gat will be after us on one of them horses and he'll drive us right into the hands of that roughneck sheriff, the way we're goin'."

"Andrew, be more reliant—upon me. Your mind reacts only to the most transparent suggestion. Just because we're bound townward is no indication we shall continue in that direction. Quite the contrary, in fact. We'll go speeding as if we were making for that miserable branch railway in the valley, but shortly before reaching it we'll abandon this bounce-about and glide back on foot through these woods and eventually over the hills to the main line and civilization. We shall thus offer to cover our retreat a deceptive syllogism based upon what psychologists might term an auto-suggestion."

"For the love of Mike, shut up! If I get outa this you'll never play none of your deceptions on me again."

Andrew was correct, once more.

Almost as he spoke he was hurtled head first over the windshield of the car, alighting fifteen feet away. Fortunately, he landed on his head and was only stunned. The light auto turned completely over, pinning the driver beneath.

HAVING reluctantly torn himself away from the ladies, Dr. Carson hurriedly organized a posse of neighbors and took up the pursuit.

Their approach, heralded by lanterns, loud voices and the sound of galloping horses, was stealthy enough, since there was none in position to see or hear. They found the overturned car and Mr. Frawley under it with his neck broken. Andrew was still unconscious, but soon responded to the professional skill of the young physician.

"What happened?" was his first coherent expression.

"The car turned over and killed your partner and threw you out here," he was informed. "How did that happen?"

Andrew did not know.

"Hey, look at this wire wrapped around the front axle," shouted a member of the posse.

The doctor examined it by the light of a lantern. "So that's the how of it," he remarked critically. "The telephone wire down in the road, the loose end out toward the way they were coming. Flying along here the wheel picked it up and wrapped it around the axle. When the slack was taken up it flopped the car like a lassoed steer. The break in the wire explains why we couldn't get anyone on the phone from the ranch. Now, if we could only find out how the wire happened to be down we could frame up a complete and scientific diagnosis of the whole case."

Andrew listened. Then he gazed around, intently. He recognized the locality.

"Say, Doc, you ain't a scientist, are you?" he called.

"To a limited degree only. Why?"

"Well, you'd better cut it out," said Andrew, painfully raising himself on one elbow. "'That's what got him." He pointed to the late Mr. Frawley.

"What? How was that?"

"He trusted to science and it croaked him," Andrew solemnly affirmed.

BYNG O' THE BYNGS

By ALBANY NASH

This story exemplifies the spirit which placed the United States in the position of dictator eighteen months after its entrance into the war.

THERE were at one time four Byngs, brothers, and honest upright gentlemen; but the barrage fire of the grim reaper had mowed down three as they advanced into the shady part of life's pathway, leaving only John Hubert, who was known as Byng o' the Byngs. John Hubert had been Byng o' the Byngs before his brothers died. He possessed more fire and activity than Henry, Albert and Chester, the three who had passed into the Shadows, and that fire remained with him when age whitened his hair and pointed beard.

Byng o' the Byngs was married to a very sweet lady, a Morris from the Blue Grass region, and the couple had one child, Jack, who at the time this story starts was an athletic boy of seventeen years of age. The Byngs lived in a little yellow cottage high up on the hill whose steepness had brought the village street to an abrupt end. Up the hillside went a path leading directly to the Byng door. The cottage had nearly covered itself with wistaria and bougainville, as if, much afraid of rolling down the slope, it had endeavored to tie itself with the living creepers to the hillside. And Byng o' the Byngs sitting on his front veranda had a splendid view of the village street, which ran from Pike's Drug Store at the hill end to Carmichael's Palace Hotel at the other end.

From that point of vantage on a warm spring day in 1912 John Hubert Byng was permitted to see a sight which stirred him greatly. Down the street immediately in front of Pike's Drug Store young Jack Byng was battling with a man much older and heavier while a crowd surged around the combatants.

Byng o' the Byngs went down the hillside at a run. He found that Jack's antagonist was Carl Schiebel, the German proprietor of a little tobacco store, and that the fight had been brought about when Mr. Carl Schiebel had brutally kicked one "Scarecat" Jones, a hungry-looking, ill-fed boy who had drifted into the village from a farm somewhere out beyond Rocky Pond, and who earned his food and a bed by running errands for Pike, the druggist.

It was a great fight. According to all who had the pleasure of viewing the struggle it was one of the best battles that ever had taken place in the village. Taylor, the policeman, was away over at Greenvale; and any other interference that might have brought the fight to an end was prevented by the arrival of Byng o' the Byngs. Head erect and gray eyes flashing, he pushed back the crowd with his bamboo cane, now and then throwing a word of advice to young Jack.

A great, great fight it was. In the first clash young Byng had succeeded in landing squarely on Schiebel's nose, and the tobacconist had not relished the punch. He flung himself at the youth and sent young Jack reeling backward to the horse-trough in front of Dow's hardware store. The German was uttering hoarse cries of rage as he pursued, his hair, which at no time showed an inclination to lie down upon his round head, now more erect and bristling than ever.

Jack Byng collided with the horse-trough, and evidently came to the conclusion that he had retreated far enough. The rush of the tobacconist had forced him to use defensive tactics only, but he

suddenly unloosed a surprise packet for Mr. Carl. A vicious and body-pushed left fist crashed against the German's right eye. Jack's right came up beneath the fat and hanging underjaw, the contact jarring Schiebel in a most unpleasant manner, He went backward and young Byng came after him like a whirlwind.

The German rallied in the centre of the road, and here the two were vigorously slugging each other when Byng o' the Byngs arrived.

"Get back!" he shouted, hitting with his cane at a few small boys who were dancing round like crazy imps. "Give them room there! Get out of the way!" Then to his son he said quietly: "Take your time, Jacky boy. Keep clear and outbox him."

Perfectly self-possessed was Byng o' the Byngs. Breathing a little fast on account of the run down the hill, his deep-set eyes flashing, he walked around the circle in which the two men battled; and those pacifists who might have been inclined to separate the two looked at the wiry figure of the master of ceremonies and kept their peace-making intentions under cover. Most of the onlookers thought the battle a little one-sided, a boy of seventeen against a grown man of thirty-eight; but Byng o' the Byngs seemed to carry no beliefs that Mr. Carl Schiebel was to bring home the bacon.

"Keep cool, Jacky boy," he would say. "Keep away from him."

Schiebel's right eye closed completely, and Jacky Byng turned his attention to its companion optic. His father smiled grimly as he noted the son's tactics. In sheer delight at Jacky's success he laid his bamboo cane on the legs of a youngster who dared to dash wildly into the circle.

"Get out!" he screamed. "Get back there!"

The youngster, fearful of missing the fun, sprang across the ring just as Jacky Byng was sidestepping a rush. Jacky tripped upon the boy and fell backward on the dusty road, and on top of him, a landslide of flesh, fell Carl Schiebel, grunting with delight as his stubby fingers groped for the boy's throat.

Byng o' the Byngs did not lose his head at that moment. It was a street fight with no Queensberry rules governing the conduct of the fighters, and with perfect calm he kept to his task of keeping a space clear for the struggle. There must have been splendid blood in the veins of the old man, blood that made him have implicit belief in the ability of his offspring to extricate himself from his position.

A cunning, cunning fighter was Jacky Byng. He kept the stubby fat fingers from his windpipe and when the baffled German half rose to his knees to get a better grip, Jacky brought his own right knee up against the pit of Mr. Schiebel's stomach. He planted it hard against the tobacconist's breath reservoir, and the grunt which the German unloosed could have been heard at the Palace Hotel. His big hands clawed at space for a moment and in that moment young Byng was on his feet.

Mr. Schiebel wiped the dust from his face, emitted a bellow to bolster up his falling courage and charged. It was pretty work at that moment. Jacky Byng had the German's measure, and any night you can hear in Carmichael's bar the story of how he handled himself. The throttling tactics of the tobacconist had made Jacky a merciless machine. His contempt for the other was apparent in the way he acted. Instead of sidestepping and ducking from the wild blows of Schiebel, he fended them, picking them off with a carelessness that surprised the breathless crowd that surrounded the two. Every labored swing that the German unloosed struck an arm barrier that made it ineffective, while Jacky Byng's fists went backward and forward, battering the swollen nose, pounding the tobacconist's left eye, coming up occasionally with a ripping undercut and closing the big mouth that had opened to fire a bellow of rage into the tense atmosphere.

There was no comeback from the German. The left eye had followed the right into retirement and his swings were so wild that he materially helped Byng o' the Byngs to keep the crowd back.

Back up the street went Schiebel, Jacky Byng following. And Jacky's father understood. Now, instead of keeping a cir-

cle, he walked forward in the direction his son was driving Schiebel, beating a path for the stumbling German with his cane.

The fight had started opposite Pike's Drug Store; and Jacky Byng drove his man up past Miss Farrel's millinery store, by Mrs. Major's boarding house, and then neatly turning him curbward with a few gentle taps on the right ear he drove him across the pavement to Mr. Carl Schiebel's little shop. Then Jacky Byng landed an uppercut on the tobacconist's jaw, and the German fell upon his own doorstep.

Scarecat Jones who had indirectly caused the battle, rushed forward with Jacky Byng's coat; and Byng o' the Byngs, with his son at his side, turned and walked off, the crowd watching them as they climbed the little path to the yellow cottage on the hillside. Behind them, adoring, worshipful, red-eyed, crept Scarecat Jones.

That was the beginning of the Byng-Schiebel feud, a feud that was perpetuated by the German. Byng o' the Byngs and his son were willing to forget, but Carl Schiebel nursed his hate.

Months passed. Scarecat Jones left the drug store and went to live at the Byng home. He was fed well there, but the hungry, scared look did not leave him. He had lived too long with starvation and blows, and all the kindness which Byng o' the Byngs and young Jack showered upon him could not stiffen his spinal column or rid him of the nickname of "Scarecat."

He was Jacky Byng's adoring slave, following him about with the mute affection which one sees in the eyes of a setter dog. With Jacky near him he would pass boldly by the shop of Mr. Carl Schiebel even when the German was standing in the door smoking his big meerschaum pipe, upon which was a design representing the two-headed Prussian eagle; but without Jacky nothing would force him to pass by the place of the man who had kicked him. He would sneak by the livery stable, dodge behind Dow's hardware store and climb the hill by a path which his cowardice had made.

Then came war. Jacky Byng's name headed the list of recruits from the village, and Scarecat Jones went around looking woe-begone and sad. Jacky was leaving him alone with the person he feared, and the prospect did not make him feel altogether happy.

The first batch of recruits marched away, the whole town, with one exception, cheering as they paraded down the street to the depot. The exception was Mr. Carl Schiebel. He stood in his doorway smoking the big meerschaum upon which was the Prussian eagle.

Someone asked him why he didn't cheer, and the German impudently replied.

"Why should I cheer? I will leave the job for my three brothers."

"Where are your brothers?" asked the puzzled questioner.

"In the German army," snapped the tobacconist. "They will cheer when they jump upon these little men. Just wait! My brothers are six feet two, each one of them, and they are so broad that they could not come in this door."

And the questioner, because he was a polite, charitable American who thought the stomach of Mr. Schiebel was a trifle upset at seeing young Americans march off on their way to the trenches, forgave the infernal impertinence and passed on. Schiebel had been boasting of the prowess of Germany from the moment the war had broken out, and his impudence was such that he made no effort to control his tongue when the country under whose flag he made a living became an active ally of the nations who were laying sods of earth upon the demon Kultur.

More and more men went. We heard of great troop movements, of enormous convoys, of the disembarkation of great masses of American soldiers in France. People compared letters and postcards, Byng o' the Byngs exhibiting the notes he received from young Jacky, now a first lieutenant, to old Carmichael, his particular crony whose two boys had gone, and to Bill Dow whose three sons had enlisted together.

And then one day in late August, when the nymphs of autumn had painted the

leaves before plucking them from the trees, the Reverend Mr. Ashworth dashed from the post office and ran full speed towards Carmichael's Palace Hotel. People stood and watched him in amazement, and, as they watched, the Reverend Ashworth astonished them some more. He charged right into the bar, a place which he had never visited before; and the onlookers gasped!

He came out presently with old Mr. Carmichael walking beside him, the Reverend Ashworth reading from a letter which he held in his hand, old Mr. Carmichael shaking his head and looking very solemn as he tried to keep up with the fast-moving parson. They met Mr. Pratt, the banker, and the Reverend Ashworth showed the letter to Mr. Pratt. The banker gave a little exclamation of horror, and he turned and walked with Mr. Carmichael and the Reverend Ashworth.

Quite a number of people watched them, and a few followed as they hurried down the street towards Pike's Drug Store. Men seeing the intent, solemn look upon the faces of the three asked each other what had happened and not getting a satisfactory answer they were led by the lariat of curiosity to follow

The three passed Pike's store and turned up the path to the Byng cottage, and then, in some strange manner, people understood. Without anyone putting the news into actual words every person on the street knew, and they waited in silence as the three men climbed the hill.

Byng o' the Byngs met them at the little steps leading up to the wistaria-cloaked veranda. He had seen them coming, and he stood bareheaded and erect as they toiled up the last fifty yards. His fine old face was set, his gray eyes tucked in deep under their bushy brows.

The banker, old Mr. Carmichael and the Reverend Ashworth paused and stood looking at Byng o' the Byngs. The parson tried to speak, but the words slipped back into his throat; the banker made an effort and failed; then old Mr. Carmichael blurted out, "My old friend!" And Byng o' the Byngs knew.

"It's Jacky?" he said quietly.

"Yes, sir, it's Jacky," answered the parson. "His colonel wrote me."

"He died in action?" questioned Byng o' the Byngs.

"Yes, yes," answered the Reverend Ashworth, tears dribbling down his cheeks, "He died a brave and gallant man. The *Croix de Guerre* was pinned upon his breast by the French General who witnessed the exploit. Shall I read you the letter?"

"I—I would like to read it alone," said Byng o' the Byngs, "that is," he added, politeness with him even at that awful moment, "if you would kindly loan it to me, Parson."

The Reverend Ashworth sprang forward and put the letter into Byng's right hand, then after Mr. Pratt and old Mr. Carmichael had shaken hands with the father of Lieutenant Jacky, they turned and filed down the hill to the village where the people were standing round talking in little groups. It was the first blow that had come to the village, and it chilled us all. We were new to the horrors of war and the suddenness of it appalled us. Jacky Byng had been struck down in an instant, struck down thousands of miles from the yellow cottage on the hillside where Byng o' the Byngs, his wife and Scarecat Jones were then sitting with the colonel's letter lying on the table before them.

After supper that evening the Reverend Ashworth and Mr. Dow, the hardware man, climbed up the path to the Byng home. They walked softly up the steps to the veranda and the Reverend Ashworth tapped lightly on the front door. But just as the parson knocked, there came a brisk shout from inside, a shout that drowned the gentle tapping, and following closely upon the shout came two more stentorian barks that made Mr. Dow and the Reverend Ashworth look at each other.

"Atten-tion!" came the swift-flung shout from indoors; then, as the two men listened in amazement the strong voice of Byng o' the Byngs cried out: "Pre-sent *Arms!*"

Mr. Dow and the Reverend Ashworth, greatly amazed, tip-toed along the veranda till they came to the window. Very cautiously they lifted their heads and peered

gray eyes blazing, while at the other end, also erect, a new look upon his face, a rifle in his hand, was Scarecat Jones!

Mr. Dow and the Reverend Ashworth watched the two for several minutes, Byng o' the Byngs roaring out the orders and Scarecat Jones executing them. Then the parson and the hardware man tiptoed down the steps and went down the hill.

"What is Scarecat going to do?" asked Mr. Dow when they reached the street.

"I couldn't say, really," answered the Reverend Ashworth. "It was an amazing sight, wasn't it?"

"Amazing?" cried Mr. Dow. "Why, it was one of the doggondest, cussedest—I beg your pardon, Parson, but seein' that chap Scarecat handling a rifle has sort of knocked me off my trolley."

On the morning following the visit of Mr. Dow and the Reverend Ashworth, Byng o' the Byngs and Scarecat Jones came down the hill together, walking side by side, keeping step like two soldiers.

They passed Pike's Drug Store, marched by Miss Farrel's millinery store and Mrs. Major's boarding house. Mr. Carl Schiebel's tobacco store is next to Mrs. Major's; and just as Byng o' the Byngs and Scarecat were passing by, their eyes straight to the front, their jaws firm in spite of the big sorrow that had crept into their hearts, the German, smoking the big meerschaum pipe that carried the design of the two-headed eagle, came to the door and saw them.

Billy Leonard who was in the store at the time said that Carl Schiebel laughed, a great, big, coarse, exulting laugh and what happened after that was the big gossip subject for the day. Billy Leonard spent the whole day on the street telling it to people.

"Byng o' the Byngs and Scarecat were going by without taking any notice of Schiebel," said Billy, narrating the incident, "and just as they passed the door the German started to laugh like a crazy man, his round piggy eyes on old man Byng, his fat fingers pointing at him. Say did you ever see a wildcat spring? Well, you'd have seen one then. He's not Scarecat Jones, he's Wildcat Jones that's what he is! Yes, sir! He was six feet away from that fat fool of a German when Schiebel unloosed his guffaw, but it might have been six inches for all the time it gave the German to smother up against what was coming. Scarecat leaped through the air and swung. Oh, sweet potatoes and sugar melons! I wouldn't have stopped that punch for a half share in the Palace Hotel. It caught Schiebel on the jaw, smashing that big pipe of his into a thousand pieces and he dropped down on the doorstep like a stuck pig. He didn't move and I guess it was a good job he didn't. Scarecat was standing over him, Byng o' the Byngs looking as unconcerned as if nothing had happened.

"'Leave him there,' he said at last when Schiebel didn't come round. 'It was where Jacky left him after he thrashed him.'"

Byng o' the Byngs and Scarecat Jones walked on up the street to the courthouse and in through the main door. The recruiting office is in the little room to the right as you enter and into this marched Scarecat and Jacky Byng's father.

"I want to enlist," said Scarecat to old Major Williams who sat at the desk.

"Do you?" asked the major smiling. "When did you come of age?"

"Yesterday," said Scarecat, and Byng o' the Byngs chuckled.

The major gave Scarecat a pen to sign his name on a slip of paper and Scarecat wrote "Algernon Charles Fitzhugh Jones."

Major Williams looked from Algernon Charles to Byng o' the Byngs; then he stood up and took the recruit's hand in his.

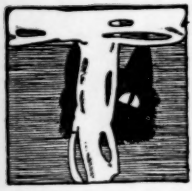
"I think you'll make a great fighter, Algernon," he said. "I do! All the great heroes of the world have been men whose courage surged up in them when they heard the stories of infamous cruelty and barbarism."

Algernon Charles Fitzhugh Jones is in France now and we're waiting for news. Old Mrs. Higgins who is so old that she thinks the war is a small affair where one man can find another if he wants to, said yesterday: "I hope he meets the three brothers of that fat fool of a German. I bet he'll eat them."

OLD MAKE-GOOD

By LEROY WALLINGFORD

Old Make-Good is a public-utility horse on the retired list. Lacking a pension, he spends his last days in a livery stable where he is kicked and cursed and ridiculed, and finally driven to revolt.



THE horse stopped nibbling at the moldy straw and listened attentively. The horse had been listening for three days. He had grown tired of listening.

He wasn't an ordinary looking horse. He was an extracrdinary-looking one. He was toil-worn, girth-galled, and footsore. His forelegs were in bad shape, a cataract covered one eye; his lungs were troubled, and he had other defects that were visible to the eye of any person who knew where to look for them. And he was keenly sensitive to the defects. Every prospective buyer was exceedingly candid in commenting on them.

When the stable door opened, the horse pulled himself together and tried to get the kink out of his off foreleg. He stiffened his spine, curved his neck, and put a little action into his tail. He knew this was demanded of him, and all through his life he had tried to do all that was demanded of him. He had tried so hard to make good. With a thrill of pride he remembered that they had nicknamed him "Old Make-Good" when he helped pull the horse-cars across Manhattan. He held the good conduct record in the car barn. Other horses collapsed with the heat, took cranky spells and fits of laziness, but he had always remembered that the cars had to run on schedule, and the old bay gelding with the white blaze on his forehead became famous along Twenty-eighth Street. The drivers fought among themselves to get him in their teams, and they enlarged upon his virtues to the smart business men who rode on the front platform and presented the drivers with cigars. The drivers always made the business men think they knew something about horses, and the flattery so pleased the business men that they were liberal with the cigars.

The old horse found it good to think over the past. He had never missed a boat or kept a crowd waiting at the Pennsylvania ferry. He had got there in spite of heat or snow.

The remembrance of those days braced him wonderfully, and the improvement in his appearance was immediately noticeable to the proprietor of the livery stable when he opened the door and invited a red-faced stranger to enter. It made the proprietor stress his words as he waved his hand in the direction of Old Make-Good.

"There he is!" he shouted. "The best horse as stands in this city to-day."

The old horse stiffened his spine as the stranger walked slowly round him. During the three days he had been at the livery he had gone through the spine-stiffening process a dozen times a day.

"Abs'lootly the best," continued the proprietor, with some heat. "He's a horse that can pull his two ton up the side of the Flatiron if you want him to do it."

The stranger laughed quietly, and the owner became indignant.

"What are you laughin' at?" he asked savagely. "Don't you think he could do it?"

"Sure!" replied he other. "I'm laughing at you thinking the Flatiron people would allow your horse to spoil the walls pulling up the load."

The sarcasm hurt the dealer.

"I know the horse!" he screamed. "I've known him to shift four tons—yes, four tons! What d'ye think of that?"

"I knew a horse to shift twenty tons!" retorted the prospective buyer. "He shift-

ed it from his feed bag to his stomach, but it took him a few years to do it."

Again he laughed sneeringly, and a cold perspiration broke out on Old Make-Good. He was weak with shame. He was being ridiculed after fifteen years of labor, and he had always done his best.

The thrust silenced the horsedealer, but he glared viciously at the other while that person rubbed his hand down the injured foreleg.

"This prop wouldn't be much use to him in climbing Flatirons," sneered the stranger. "Feels like as if he'd been trying to stop some hot baseballs with it. You didn't tell me he was a ball player."

The owner met the sneer with a string of curses. "What d'ye expect?" he yelled. "I'm offerin' the old carcase at fifteen dollars, an' he's cheap. I don't want to smother up his little defects! You're one of these loose-tongued jays who don't know a mule from a rocking horse, and you think I've got nothing to do but listen to your chirrup."

"Don't get mad because I didn't go into raptures over your crock," laughed the visitor.

But the livery proprietor was excited. He followed the other across the stable yard, all the while criticising his knowledge of horseflesh, and after he had seen him into the street he returned to the stall and punched Old Make-Good viciously in the ribs.

"You durned old crock," he growled, "you always try to look your worst when any one comes around to squint at you."

The old horse winced. He wondered how many more blows he would receive before a sale would be effected. He wondered if a sale would ever be effected, or if he would be kicked or starved to death in the dirty stable.

Ten minutes afterwards he was still pondering over the problem when the stable door again opened, and the proprietor reappeared followed by a clean, wholesome-looking boy of about sixteen years of age. The proprietor looked jubilant.

"There he is!" he cried excitedly. "The finest old horse in Manhattan. Can pull two ton up a tenement stairway! Never shirks his work, doesn't wear out many shoes, and eats very little. Doesn't he look the thing?"

The boy walked around Old Make-Good and stared at him admiringly.

"He looks a good old fellow," he murmured.

The dealer patted the lad on the back approvingly.

"You're a young chap as knows a good thing," he cried. "He is a good old fellow. Every other horse that was as good as him died from overworking themselves. That's what you want to be careful of. Don't let him overwork hisself! What did you say you wanted him for?"

The boy stammered uneasily. "Father died last week," he said, "and I thought if I had a quiet horse I could sell fruit and vegetables so as to get enough money to keep Mother."

Old Make-Good glanced at the boy's innocent face and then at the cunning grin on the features of the livery man.

"Well, that's your horse!" shouted the dealer. "I'm letting you have him for sixty dollars just because you're a young fellow makin' a start in the world, but to any one else his price is a hundred. Don't you think he's cheap?"

"He's very, very cheap," assented the boy, and he walked forward and patted Old Make-Good on the nose. "I'll go right back and get the money from Mother," he continued. "She's just keeping it till I had a look at him."

The livery man told him to lose no time, as some one else might be along to snap up the bargain, and the boy raced madly away.

When the stable door closed again, the old horse looked around. The boy was being robbed. He knew he wasn't worth the fifteen dollars that had been asked of the first man. But sixty! He shuddered from his nose to his tail as he thought over the youth's innocence.

Again he looked around the dirty, rotten stable. What could he do to save the boy from the horse sharper—the sharper who had struck him viciously only a few minutes before!

Just above his head a heavy beam sup-

ported the loft. The horse eyed it carefully. The wall of the stable had moved out of the perpendicular, and one end of the beam had a very insecure resting place. Old Make-Good wondered how the livery proprietor had overlooked the danger. A restive animal, by kicking the support from under the beam, would demolish the barn. The horse thrilled as he saw how easily it could be done. And if it were done?

For the space of fully five minutes the old horse thought over his life. He had done everything that was demanded of him. He had always made good. Joyfully he recalled the days when he had galloped with the heavy horse-cars. He recollected how the passengers had bribed the drivers with cigars to catch boats and trains, and how he, Old Make-Good, had earned those cigars. Yet he had received nothing but the wounds and scars.

The proprietor of the livery stable was dozing peacefully wnile he waited for the return of the boy with the sixty dollars, when a tremendous crashing noise caused him to spring to his feet. He dashed across the yard and caromed heavily into a frightened groom.

"What's the matter?" yelled the proprietor.

"The loft f ll in and killed that old crock you wus just tryin' to sell," stammered the man. "I knew that beam would slip one of these days."

The livery man was speechless for the space of three minutes. The cloud of dust that rose from the ruins floated down the street. He watched it with stupid, staring eyes, and then he saw something that made him curse fearfully. The clean, wholesome-looking boy with the sixty dollars in his hand was running up the sidewalk.

Old Make-Good had kept his reputation untarnished to the end.

The Black Cat Club

PRIZES for criticisms of the stories in the September BLACK CAT were awarded to the following members: Pendleton P. Karr, Washington, D. C.; G. Lombard Kelly, Asheville, N. C.; Mrs. John R. Powell, St. Louis, Mo.; Miss Harriette Wilbur, Duluth, Minn.; Frank G. Davis, Richmond, Va.; Nels H. Seaburg, Boston, Mass.; Maurice Baum, Pittsburg, Pa.; Miss Margaret Swanson, New York, N. Y.; Edward B. Fenn, Meriden, Conn.; Miss Kay Kasser, New York, N. Y.; H. Burgess Miller, Dearborn, Mo.; Mrs. John B. Gyllenhaal, Philadelphia, Pa.; Henry Victor, Los Angeles, Calif.; Miss Theresa M. D. Forster, Sterling, Ills.

The Custody of the Dog is a curious story of how a man's devotion to his dog is given expression in an unusual twist in his will which automatically rewards the deserving. Most of us are accustomed to the small town atmosphere and the familiar, not to say hackneyed, theme of the faithful dog mourning for his master, the test applied to the heirs, and the final reward of simple and unselfish virtue. There is nothing new about it except the new industrial impetus furnished by the pearl fishing and button making, which make it all the more difficult to find a friend for a useless old dog among the people just wakened to a "man-sized, primitive passion." This connection between environment and events is well done. The dog is humanized by an attempt to convey to the reader the dog's thoughts and emotions, and in no way does this dangerous expedient offend by overcleverness on the part of the dog. The old theme of cruelty punished and kindness rewarded is as old as story-making, but is always new with every variation; and the variation used by the author is original in several ways. One knows that the cupidity of Avaline and Amos will overreach itself, and that Paul Bland's good-heartedness will prove his fortune. The end anticipated, as the author plainly intended, the question that remains is of still greater interest: How will the rewarding of the deserving one be accomplished? And to this problem, the dog-tax receipt is a solution that is striking because of its simplicity.

The Haunted Oak starts out well and promises to be a venture in occultism and the reader is carefully guided to this desirable goal, when possibly the author not having dipped his pen deep enough in the

ink of the black art to portray his vision, he falls back on the efficacy of the bludgeon to produce his singleness of effect. The story is constructed almost wholly of hackneyed material; negro fidelity, memory lost by a blow on the head and recovered by the same means, superstitious fear of graveyards, buried treasure, and so on. What interest it contains depends on a careful combination of these in such a manner that it seems an actual happening. It begins with a slow dignity that never becomes dull; it develops both characters and incidents that hold the reader's attention, although they never become in the least grippingly dramatic; and it draws to a conclusion that is perfectly adequate because of its simplicity and human appeal.

Check, 10 Paid, may be filed under the general heading "Getting Father's Consent." It is a good business story in which a young man who is fully alive to his opportunities outwits the cruel father who is the obstacle to his courtship. The girl involved in his fortunes is a mere shadow of feminity, but sufficiently prominent to properly motivate the young man's course of action. The climax comes in the demonstration of the latter's business ability, by which he reaps an exorbitant profit on a rising market for cabbage seed and at the same time makes the old man pay dearly for his obstinacy.

T'other Dear Charmer is unreal from the beginning. The unsettled condition of George's mind is as unreasonable as his placing his final decision in the hands of his aunt. In fact, the hypothesis of a man's appeal to a kinswoman in deciding on a wife and the condition of a person's being equally attracted by two persons of the opposite sex to the extent of being willing to marry either are in the province of what the author herself calls "professional dime novel class," which is no reflection on the BLACK CAT, which now costs fifteen cents. One is supposed to acquiesce cheerfully and promptly in the theory that a nice girl must love babies and want to cuddle every one she sees. As a matter of fact, a nice girl doesn't care about being conspicuous in public any more than a man does; and if either of the two who failed to pass the test had been in the least calculating, or had been planning on landing the hero like a nice, fat fish, she would have known that e chance of her young life was before her to appear maternal in public. Nevertheless, the story reads well, even if one might wish that Ardis had kept George just a little while on the gridiron. The baby's behavior seemed to be made to order, for he behaved in the most outrageous manner, which is something the normal baby will not do unless pricked with a pin, or has a stomach full of wind; but of course, the author had the right to select any feature of a baby's conduct that would make her story convincing.

Apple Pie and High Finance is a business story in which the shrewdness of a woman's wit and her resourcefulness overcome all obstacles in the way of a business venture, even to the surrender of herself. The plausibility of the story might have been saved with a change or two. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Margaret Hope Chandler might have gone to work under the first two names, omitting the last for the sake of the family pride; but the man for whom this talented girl worked so hard and expended so much devotion and loyalty would have to be a very exceptional person to preserve an appearance of plausibility, instead of being one whose chief strength consisted in being able to recognize his deliverer. If the author had sacrificed his desire to write smartly of Edwards and his six failures and his common origin, and had made him a younger, fresher knight in the business tournament field, we could easily credit a plucky girl's decision to give him the benefit of the Chandler business acumen; anyone smart enough to do that, would have been cool headed enough to see that she got something for her pains.

Stories savoring of polemic themes are always difficult to put over with any degree of success, and *Reform Meanders* perhaps may be classed under this head. Instinctively one feels that the author approached the task in a preachy frame of mind rather than as a story teller, and did not sugar-coat the moral of the tale with the web of romantic interest. While reform meanders, the thread of the story does not miss much following its example. The action is slow to begin and drags throughout, and there is not sufficient dramatic tenseness in the situation to carry the reader on with the desired amount of curiosity.

Charybdis Without Scylla is an odd bit of invention that arouses a natural curiosity at the first glance because it is so frankly patterned after Stockton's famous question, and tantalizing model. For so short a story, it is an exceedingly complicated one. A first reading piques one's interest, and it is only on account of its brevity that the reader skims over it a second time for the purpose of fully grasping the denouement.

Note: Lack of space necessitates the omission of criticisms of *The Insuring of Mrs. Harrigan* and *Thespis Versus Midas.*

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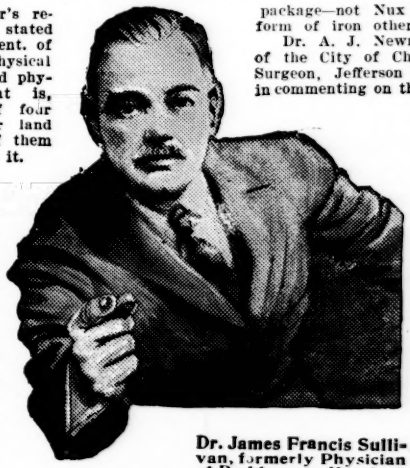

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